

# The Jesuit University in a Broken World

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Like many of our contemporaries, we who work and study at universities like this one are concerned about our mission and the quality of our service. What does excellence and what do Jesuit and Catholic identity mean today? Ignatius of Loyola says that our mission is to "help souls," that is, help others progress in life's journey, and advance God's work in the world. At a university we do that in a particular way. We are now trying to do it in times of dramatic, even scary, change. War, violence, poverty and environmental destruction are spreading. In the South Bronx during the 1980s, I watched neighborhoods, families and egos crumble. Now, as I walk the streets of San Salvador and talk to people from other countries, it feels like the South Bronx has globalized. Many are apprehensive about the future. Sept. 11, 2001 marked the globalization of insecurity and an alarming drift by the U.S. government into lawlessness.<sup>1</sup>

If I were in college today, I would be tempted to put my head down and work on a personal survival kit -- a secure job with plenty of income -- to shelter me in the storms of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is doubtful that this strategy will make anyone really secure, though, to say nothing of more human. We are meant for more. We know education has to be more. We also know it is more than filling heads. In a Christian university, especially, we want to help our students prepare themselves to transform an unjust world, not function comfortably within it.

Along with many Christian churches and other communities, the Jesuits, like the Marymount Sisters and Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, consider the promotion of social justice and inculturation to be central to their mission and the service of faith. Since you have asked me to say a word about faith and justice in general, as well as about higher education, I will divide my remarks in two parts: first the relationship between faith and justice; then, some implications for the mission of the university community.

## I. Justice and the Service of Faith

When the Jesuits defined their mission in 1975 as the service of faith which does justice, they were echoing developments in the official teaching of the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council had committed the church to assuming the sufferings and hopes of humanity.<sup>2</sup> After the Council, reflection concerning poverty, injustice and the mission of the church evolved

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of our global social crisis, especially as it affects poor regions, see Manuel Castells, *The Information Age*, Vol. III: *End of Millenium*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), Chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>2</sup> See The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, 1.

quickly, and commitment to promoting justice grew more explicit. In their document, *Justice in the World*, the bishops of the 1971 synod in Rome labeled work for justice a “constitutive dimension” of the church’s evangelizing mission on behalf of “the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”<sup>3</sup> Paul VI re-affirmed this teaching in his 1974 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, as did John Paul II in less radical language in *Redemptoris hominis* (1979).<sup>4</sup> The Latin American bishops had pioneered this thinking at Medellín in 1968 and re-affirmed it in 1979. In this same period, the World Council of Churches and many mainstream protestant churches were also re-discovering the centrality of the poor and oppressed for Christian faith and the church’s mission. It is no exaggeration to say that these developments amount to an historic recovery of a central dimension of Christianity that had been neglected since the time of Constantine in the fourth century. They also reflect the mid-century shift of the demographic center of gravity of Christianity from the relatively rich nations of the northern hemisphere to the poor nations of the South.<sup>5</sup>

The new language also reflects a better understanding of the message of the Bible. For Christians, Christ is the center of the Bible, and he announced just one thing: the coming of God as king. Jesus announced regime change on earth. According to the programmatic announcement of the beatitudes in Luke, God is coming as king to deliver those who are poor, hungry and afflicted from their suffering; and has cancelled the debts of despised sinners. The gospel is about new persons, new social relations, a new world. It demands repentance and faith of all who wish to be part of the new age in which sin, suffering and death will be no more. In Jesus’ message, while God loves all and invites everyone to the banquet, God takes the side of the poor against their oppressors, not because the poor are good but because God is good, just as God forgives sinners, not because of any merit of theirs but simply because of God’s love and compassion. This understanding of Jesus’ message allows us to see that the God of the Hebrew scriptures, too, is the defender of the orphan, the widow and the defenseless, the liberator of the poor. The poor and the cause of justice is also, therefore, just as central to Judaism as to Christianity. It is also a central theme for Islam.

This awakening in the Christian churches to the centrality of justice not only reflects new insight into the faith; it also reflects a waking up to the world around us. During the last four centuries humanity has steadily grown in awareness that the social order did not come divinely sanctioned from the hand of God. It is very much the creation of sinful human beings. This has helped the Catholic Church gradually come to understand that its traditional hellenic stress on order and harmony frequently has to yield in the messy struggle to meet the demands of justice.

Pedro Arrupe was quick to grasp and to champion the impulse of the Spirit in this historic shift. The Jesuits follow his lead when they affirm that the service of faith and the promotion of

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<sup>3</sup> *Justice in the World*, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. EN, 9 and RH, 15.

<sup>5</sup> See Walbert Bühlmann, *The Coming of the Third Church: An Analysis of the Present and Future of the Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1977), p. 20; Penny Lernoux, *People of God: The Struggle for World Catholicism* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 8.

justice must characterize our ministries.

## II. Higher Standards for Higher Education

What does that mean for the mission of a university like this one? It suggests to me seven higher standards for higher education. First, a university should help us understand reality, the real world. Second, since education seeks wisdom, it should have a focal point, namely, the drama of life and death, good and evil, injustice and liberation. Third, we must take steps to free ourselves from bias. Fourth, education should help people discover their vocation in life, above their deepest vocation to love and serve. Fifth, a Jesuit university must be a place where the Catholic faith is studied and handed on to those who would embrace it. Sixth, we must reach out to those who otherwise could not afford to come here. Finally, we must project knowledge and social criticism beyond the campus, into the wider society.

These standards are *more demanding* than those of the competition. I do not believe that a Jesuit university like this university should measure its excellence by the same yardstick as Harvard or Stanford. We must beware of the prestige virus that motivates us to imitate them as far as we can, plus stay Catholic. On the other hand, neither should Jesuit universities become the kind of confessional Catholic enclave that Ave Maria or Steubenville seem to aspire to be. This university cannot compete with Ivy League endowments and laboratories; but it can and should hold itself to a more comprehensive set of academic standards than either the modern pure-reason paradigm of the Enlightenment or pseudo-Catholic fundamentalism. The Catholic and Ignatian vision takes us beyond standard liberal and conservative models that are frequently held up today. We have "higher standards" in our search for truth.

### A First Higher Standard: Giving Priority to Reality

Ignacio Ellacuría, the martyred president of the UCA, used to insist that the principle subject of study of the university was *la realidad nacional*, the national reality. The first higher standard I propose is that to make reality our primary object of study. This can not be taken for granted.

Prior to last November's elections, polls showed that more than 72 percent of the people who voted for Bush believed that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, or programs to produce them, before the invasion of Iraq and that he collaborated with the terrorist group Al Qaeda. This is false and that information was readily available.

The U.S. poll also revealed that the people who supported Bush believed, falsely, that the president supports a series of international treaties, like the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the treaty outlawing anti-personnel land mines, the International Criminal Court, and the Kyoto Protocols on global warming. The voters were mistaken on these matters, of course, because their government deceived them.

Like many foreigners, my Salvadoran friends were amazed at the November election results (and the election of governor Arnold Schwarzenegger before that!). They could appreciate how, in El Salvador's elections last year, the government could brazenly deceive and manipulate a population with fewer than six years of formal education, on average. I had to

explain that the average United States citizen has a poor understanding of social reality, especially outside the U.S. After working all day, many inform themselves with the news sound-bites, headlines and by what "people say." Formal education fails to overcome this problem and probably fosters it. In school, Americans tend to study "the literature" of academic fields rather than social reality.

We do need to master "the literature" of our disciplines, but not simply for itself. We study the literature in order to learn about reality and about life. When we lose ourselves in a novel by Faulkner, or a work of art, that wonderful experience helps us learn about life and shapes us to live more fully. However, every scholar knows how a reductive focus on dominating the literature of ever-narrower sub-specialties can keep us from understanding reality. When that happens, the literature dominates us. Reality is complicated; there are many fields to cover. Specialization is also necessary. My contention is that the deficient political culture in the U.S. is one sign that our educational system fails to educate students about social reality, about how society works and how it fails. While we need to understand local and national reality, in the world's only superpower nation in these globalized times, it is crucial to look beyond our borders and study global reality, *la realidad mundial*. Focusing on social reality is important for another reason, as well.

### **A Second Higher Standard: Wisdom**

The goal of education, especially Christian education, is more than knowledge-as-information. It is wisdom. Wisdom means understanding life's meaning and knowing how to live well. The overriding objective of wisdom gives order and structure to learning. While practically everything is worthy of study, not all aspects of reality are equally important. Reality -- its meaning, or significance -- turns around a central focus: the drama of life and death, of injustice and liberation, of good and evil, of sin and grace. At a university, priority goes to the most important questions, the life-and-death questions. Naturally, there are differential equations to solve and periodic tables to learn. Let us study obscure insects and obscure authors. But let all that be part of a collective quest to understand how life and well-being (both human and non-human) are threatened and how they can flourish. In the language of faith: the cross is the center of reality, the center of history -- Jesus' cross and all the crosses of our own time. It is from the foot of the cross that the most important questions arise: Who are the crucified people of today? What do they suffer and why? How can we bring them down from their crosses? How can we help them rise again?<sup>6</sup> From the foot of these crosses we can see straight.<sup>7</sup> Otherwise, our

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. I. Ellacuría, "Las iglesias latinoamericanas interpelan a la Iglesia de España," *Sal Terrae* 3 (1982), p. 230.

<sup>7</sup> In a provocative essay, Gil Bailie tries to diagnose the crumbling of Western philosophy which we witness today in the thought of deconstructionists like Jacques Derrida. Appealing to René Girard's analysis of culture, Bailie understands Western philosophy as an attempt to explain reality abstractly while ignoring the violence which lies at the base of all human societies. Because it ignores the central reality of the victim, Western philosophy, for all its progress, has chased its tail for 25 centuries and has entered into a radical crisis, along with most of our social institutions, now that we are no longer able to hide this foundational violence. From the foot of

wisdom turns to folly. University study should give priority to suffering and its causes, as well as to healing and liberation. Wisdom is the product of reason integrally considered, reason engaging the whole person-- intellect, will and emotions.

### **A Third Higher Standard: Cognitive Liberation and Reason Integrally Considered**

Thirdly, searching for the truth requires addressing the way social conditioning and bias stand between us and reality. Most of us in university communities are middle-class. Well-intentioned professors frequently find themselves proposing answers to students who lack the questions because of their limited experience and inherited biases. Our students, and all of us, need cognitive hygiene. We need cognitive liberation. That is the third higher standard I propose.<sup>8</sup>

In our university discussions, intelligent, informed people can marshal impressive arguments on either side of the debate over free trade, the war in Iraq or premarital relations. However, people weigh the facts differently. We can argue endlessly, and even coherently, without resolving the issue at hand. Why? Our rational discourse rarely leads us beyond explicit positions to address the presuppositions that underlie our arguments. I mean the largely unconscious anthropological, cosmological and moral myths and assumptions which constitute the horizon of each person's world, the "grid" within which we interpret and evaluate data.

Our cultural formation (by family, school, church, the media), experience and past choices circumscribe our imagination and intelligence. Along with the benefits, we inherit the biases of our family, social class, race, age group, sex, religion and nation. We have blind spots. Some questions never arise. Unless we address these limitations, our search for the truth is open to challenge *on strictly academic grounds*, as partial, inauthentic, biased.

Today, many believe our basic assumptions rest ultimately on value-commitments, including religious commitments, that are in the final analysis irrational. From this they conclude that our various world-views, while they ought to be internally coherent, are nonetheless mutually incommensurable and that there is no rational basis to adjudicate among them. Therefore, we ought not expect value-laden debates in the cafeteria or faculty lounge to arrive at any "correct" conclusions. While there is some truth to this, it lets us off the hook too easily, in so far as our basic assumptions are *unexamined* and based on *limited and partial* experience and *unfounded*

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the cross we can do philosophy. Only from there can we see straight. When avoid the crucified victims of history, we lose our way. Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), Chapter 13.

<sup>8</sup> The Latin American Catholic bishops called for liberating education at their historic 1968 Conference in Medellín. See the Medellín document entitled *AEducation*.@

*prejudice.*

Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Gadamer, sociologists of knowledge, feminists and educational psychologists have all labored to map the non-rational substratum of our conscious and rational life. Some of our biases are more innocent than others and may succumb to direct reasonable assault. Others serve narrow interests and resist enlightenment. Why? They are rooted in our commitments and shored up by the habits of the heart that were shaped by interaction with our earliest family and institutional environment. In some cases, bias is rooted in selfishness or in institutional injustice. We take sin seriously -- personal, habitual, original and structural sin -- but we rarely draw the cognitive consequences, namely personal, habitual, original and structural distortion. Because of distortion, the search for truth is more than a matter of pushing back the frontiers of ignorance. It requires unmasking lies, many of which have been foisted upon us. In these times of war that is waged on false pretenses and lying in public on the increase, this point is very important. At a university, we cannot afford to give the lies equal time with the truth, as the media sometimes does. We need to help students to unmask lying and deception as well as more innocent forms of bias.

In the spirit of the Enlightenment, most modern "masters of suspicion" prescribe more reason and conscious awareness as the solution to bias. Is that enough? I doubt it. Reality is reasonable, but we are naive to suppose that reason alone can take us to it. Discovering truth -- above all, acquiring wisdom -- requires enriched reason. Overcoming bias and distortion is a matter of reason integrally considered -- that is, reason rooted in experience and practice, reason nourished by contemplation, affectivity and imagination. Although St. Ignatius did not understand contemporary theories of social psychology, he did understand this. In the end, cognitive liberation requires nothing less than personal transformation -- conversion. I have such a high stake in my deepest assumptions, because, in the end, they are embedded in my identity. To question them is to question *me* and to shake the foundations of my world. Our search for the truth will therefore involve the kind of wholesome crises that challenge our half-conscious commitments, produce new questions, shake our world, expand our horizons and lead us to re-configure our world-view, re-locating important issues at the center and de-centering less-important ones. An example can illustrate this.

*Encountering the victims.* Waves of foreign delegations come through El Salvador each year, including many college students from the U.S. As you may know, we have a wonderful semester abroad program for students of Jesuit universities. Most of the gringos deplane a little anxious. They have heard about the poverty, the war and recent earthquakes, and they vaguely fear what awaits them.

To their surprise, once in El Salvador they spend much of their time wondering why these poor people are smiling and why they insist on sharing their tortillas with strangers like them. However, if they listen to the stories of unspeakable hardship, the people will break their hearts. That will turn out to be the most important thing that happens on their trip. It can be a life-changing experience, if the visitors let it happen.

The humanity of the poor crashes through their defenses. As they see their reflection in the eyes of the poor ("They're just like us!"), they begin to feel disoriented. Their world -- half-consciously divided into important people like themselves and unimportant people like their hosts -- begins to shake. The experience is a little like falling in love; and, in fact, something like that is

happening. Their horizon opens. They are entering a richer world.

We don't have to travel to Central America for this. It can happen close to home, meeting abused women and children, oppressed minorities, homeless people, immigrants. What goes on in such encounters? Why are they so powerful? To understand that, we have ourselves in perspective.

I belong to a peculiar tribe, the middle-class tribe. We're not bad people; just a minority under the illusion of most minorities that the universe revolves around us. The poor can free us from this illusion.

The middle-class cultures, which have only existed for about 200 years, have made extraordinary advances in civilization, not only technological advances but also spiritual, cultural and political improvements. Although these often came at great cost to despoiled nations and races, we need not disparage them. At the same time, we need to recognize that we pay a high price for our freedoms and our economic security. While they allow us to pursue our personal life-projects, they also foster individualism. They separate us from each other. More serious still, they distance us from the poor and the daily struggle to keep the household alive against the threats of hunger, disease, accidents and violence. By removing us from this struggle, which has been the daily fare of most of humanity through the ages, the benefits of modernity induce in us a chronic low-grade confusion about what is really important: namely, life itself and love. To make matters worse, our technology and media deceive us into thinking that our way of life and worldview is normative. The victims stop us short; they show us that they, the marginalized, are at the center of things. We who nosh in cafés are on the fringe.

Engaging the outcasts puts us in touch with the world, with ourselves and with divine mercy. They draw us into life's central drama, disclosing that the world is much crueller than we had supposed, but also much more wonderful. When they insist on celebrating life, no matter how bad things are, and on sharing what little they have, they communicate hope. There is more here than meets the eye. Sin abounds, but grace abounds even more (Rom 5,20).<sup>9</sup>

They also put us in touch with ourselves. Engaging the outcast calls forth and heals those parts of ourselves that we had banished into unconscious exile.

Finally, many testify that the victims place us before the mercy of God. They experience deep peace when the poor welcome them -- before they have cleaned up their act with the victims of our divided world. When these qualified victims are disposed to forgive, they mediate an acceptance greater than their own. They enable us to acknowledge our part in the sin of the world and to stand without illusions before the divine Mystery. Again, we don't have to travel far for this. But don't we need the crucified people to break open our world? Shouldn't that be part of education integrally considered?

*Reason and liberating affect.* Engaging the victims illustrates the importance of feelings for cognitive liberation and reason integrally considered. Visitors to poor communities in places like El Salvador -- or U.S. urban ghettos -- have to "sit with" their experience and work through

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<sup>9</sup> In some circles it is unfashionable to speak of victims. While we should discourage a victim-syndrome of passive self-pity, it would be far worse to deny the objective reality to which the word "victim" refers. Victims are those who are harmed by objectively unjust actions, policies, relationships and institutions. Being a victim does not preclude being a self-directed agent.

the feelings and the thoughts it evokes. As the new reality enters, it stirred feelings, thoughts and, eventually, hands and feet. In such encounters, people who are properly disposed experience what St. Ignatius calls "consolation" and "desolation." Consolation -- peace and joy, a sense of fullness that is disproportionate to its apparent causes -- directs us beyond ourselves in hope and generosity. Desolation is its opposite: sadness, inner turmoil, a leaden discouragement. These too-brief descriptions will have to do for now.<sup>10</sup>

Consolation is the touch of God, drawing us into greater freedom and maturity. Desolation closes us in upon ourselves and shrinks our vision. Consolation expands our horizon and dissolve intellectual bias. Paul Ricoeur says the symbol gives rise to thought,<sup>11</sup> to which we can add: Consolation gives rise to liberating symbols. It leads into the light.

*Reason and right action.* Reason integrally considered is rooted in action, especially right action. Life is a moral drama, and grasping its meaning requires moral sympathy and practical commitment. It requires entering the drama and allowing it to enter us. That is what happens when we come to know another person in friendship or as we fall in love. It is what happens when we enter a foreign country or a new neighborhood or place of work.<sup>12</sup> Action raises questions and forces us to think things through. Members of Alcoholics Anonymous say that we don't need to think ourselves into a new way of acting as much as we need to act ourselves into a new way of thinking. To know the truth, we must do the truth (cf. John 3,21; cf. 1John 1,6 and also John 7,17). The practice of compassion leads to wisdom. It overcomes the original prejudice that divides the world into important people and unimportant people, who are usually poor and "unproductive."

This principle holds for universities as well as individuals. Ignacio Ellacurfa wrote, "It is often said that the university should be impartial. We do not agree. The university should strive to be free and objective, but objectivity and freedom may demand taking sides." The UCA takes

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, nos. 313-336, according to the standard numbering of paragraphs.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), pp. 347-57.

<sup>12</sup> Knowledge in the Bible is a matter of experience by the whole person in a way similar to what we are speaking about here. By contrast, Western thought distinguishes sharply between sense and feeling on the one hand and conceptual knowledge on the other. The philosophy of Xavier Zubiri is an important exception. For him human beings are animals of sensible [or feeling] intelligence, *inteligencia sentiente*. In this view, there is no such thing as pure reason or intelligence separated from the senses and the feelings. Xavier Zubiri, *Inteligencia sentiente. Inteligencia y realidad* (Madrid: Alianza, 1980).

Western philosophy generally characterizes experience and knowledge as an *encounter* between the knower and the known, the subject and the object, or it seeks to overcome that scheme. Largely thanks to Marx, the mutual shaping of subject and object colors a great deal of contemporary philosophy. This is an advance. Still, besides encounter and mutual shaping, I think we need the idea of the *inter-penetration* of knower and known to adequately characterize both knowledge and experience.



the side of the poor “because they are unjustly oppressed.” They have the truth on their side. “Our university as a university has an acknowledged preferential option for the poor . . . . We take this stand with them in order to be able to find the truth of what is happening and the truth that all of us must be seeking and building together. There are good theoretical reasons to think that such an effort is well grounded epistemologically, but in addition, we think there is no alternative in Latin America, in the Third World, and elsewhere, for universities and intellectuals who claim to be of Christian inspiration.”<sup>13</sup>

These three higher standards -- the focus on reality, especially suffering reality, and the need for cognitive liberation and reason integrally considered -- aim at greater academic rigor and intellectual authenticity.]

#### **A Fourth Higher Standard: Vocation and Solidarity**

That leads us to a fourth way in which our educational standards must be higher. Education in the Ignatian spirit is care for the whole person, *cura personalis*. The students who come to our universities are also struggling with mission and identity. On average, they are less sure than their forebears about what is real and right and wrong. They are exposed to a wide range of worldviews and versions of the good life. This pluralism challenges traditional authorities and institutions, including churches. It makes it hard for people to “find themselves.” Young people especially confront contradictory role models -- a Mother Theresa on the one hand, a Britney Spears on the other. These days it seems that university students suffer an identity crisis about once a month! The search for truth and meaning is also a search for identity, and that means a search for our vocations. Education of the whole person includes helping people find their vocation in life.

Postmodern society knows nothing of vocations. Late capitalism might offer you a job or even a profession, but the only vocation it knows is getting and spending. This cheapens us and robs us of our dignity.

My vocation might be to raise children, discover new planets, drive a truck, lead a social movement -- or a combination of these. When we discover part of our vocation, part of what we were born for, something clicks inside. We feel our life has new meaning and purpose. People are starved for that today.

Although vocations vary greatly, we all share a deepest vocation, *as human beings*: the vocation to love and serve. We actually “hear” the call to love and serve in daily life, competing with other voices around us. In privileged moments, the call comes through clearly.

In his memoir, *Markings*, former U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld describes “hearing” and responding to an invitation that transformed his life: “I do not know Who -- or what -- put the question,” he writes. “But at some point I did answer ‘Yes’ to Someone -- or Something -- and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life, in self-surrender, had a goal.” Responding to this call cost him dearly: “I came to a time and place where I realized . . . that the price for committing one’s life would be reproach, and that the

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<sup>13</sup> Ignacio Ellacuría, “The Challenge of the Poor Majority,” in John Hassett and Hugh Lacey (eds.), *Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador’s Murdered Jesuits* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991), p. 175.

only elevation possible to man lies in the depths of humiliation. After that, the word "courage" lost its meaning, since then nothing could be taken from me."<sup>14</sup> Hammarskjöld's vocation led to his death, working for peace in war-torn central Africa.

Maryknoll sister Ita Ford paid the same price in El Salvador almost 25 years ago this coming December. The armed forces labeled Ita and her fellow-sisters subversives for their work among refugees. Shortly before she and three companions were raped and killed, Ita wrote to her young niece, Jennifer, in the United States: "I hope you come to find that which gives life a deep meaning for you. Something worth living for -- maybe even worth dying for -- something that energizes you, enthuses you, enables you to keep moving ahead. I can't tell you what it might be. That's for you to find, to choose, to love."<sup>15</sup> Ita invited Jennifer to discover her deepest calling.

Life is short; we only get to do it once. We can sleep through it. Consumer society can keep us kids-in-toyland forever. Like Prufrock in T.S. Eliot's poem, we can end up measuring out our lives in coffee spoons.

The wake-up call to service resonates with our deepest need for something worth living for, even dying for to find ourselves by losing ourselves.

This is the fourth higher standard I propose: The university should not only awaken the dramatist or the chemist in students; above all it should help awaken their deepest vocation as human beings which St. Ignatius recognized as the call of Christ to collaborate with God who labors to bring about the Reign of God.

As the superior general of the Jesuits, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, put it at Santa Clara University four years ago, "The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become," in their becoming "men and women for others," men and women of solidarity in a sharply divided world.<sup>16</sup>

As the word suggests, vocations are called forth from within us. They are called forth by role models and mentors -- often by generous teachers -- and in general by the world around us.

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<sup>14</sup> Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 205.

<sup>15</sup> I am grateful to Ita's brother, Bill, for the full text. Judith M. Noone, M.M (*The Same Fate as the Poor* [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1984], p. 117) and Phyllis Zagano (*Ita Ford: Missionary Martyr* [New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1996], p. 1) quote parts of the letter.

<sup>16</sup> Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education," discourse given at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California, Oct. 6, 2000.

Martin Luther King discovered his calling in response in the Montgomery bus boycott and subsequent events. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Nazi Germany and Dorothy Day in Depression-era New York grew into their vocations in response to their harsh surroundings. Therefore, a lot depends on where we place ourselves. If King had spent his youth at pool side, no one would remember him today. Some places are clearly better than others for hearing the call to love and serve. The victims are privileged mediators of that call. Engaging them awakens our deepest vocation.

*A Century of International Solidarity?* In universities like this one, we want to help students to discover their vocations in response to the world around them. The world today is a mix of bad news and good. Major institutions are in crisis, and few people today believe that governments or political parties can arrest the spread of poverty, violence, AIDS and environmental crisis. That is bad news. But, on the other hand, there is good news. Where? When I ask people who they think is advancing the cause of humanity, they answer: Amnesty International, the United Nations, environmental groups, women's groups, community groups and churches. In many parts of the world, we are witnessing the burgeoning of citizens groups who are pushing for change from the bottom up and across the base of societies. Groups of struggling neighbors, indigenous people, women, ethnic and sexual minorities, consumers and immigrants, along with environmental groups, human rights organizations, unions, small and medium-size businesses, cooperatives and communal banks are sowing the seeds of a new social order whose precise contours still escape us. Many of these groups stress democratic participation and accountability in their internal organization, which is no small thing in what have been authoritarian societies.

This effervescence of civil society is a major sign of hope. However, whether in El Salvador or in Los Angeles, the micro-initiatives are up against macro-obstacles. In Central America, if you openly challenge companies who are polluting the river, you could be found floating in the river the next morning. The same goes for challenging official crime and corruption. So, human rights activists make friends with Human Rights Watch. Environmental activists ally with Greenpeace. Cooperatives, forced to compete with big business, link up locally and internationally. So do women, indigenous peoples and unions. Local communities forge ties with sister communities and sister parishes in the U.S. and Europe to work for local development. Without these alliances, the local groups have little chance against those who control the market and the means of violence.

Even with alliances, they look like small fish in a pond of sharks. Titanic competitors dominate the international scene: transnational capital, the G7 governments, international finance and trade institutions (the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization) with their political and economic power, and the ultimate backup of military force. And yet, there are powerful signs of hope at the international level, as well. Huge protests in Seattle, Bangkok, Prague, Genoa and Cancun have pressured concessions from the global powers that be. A coalition of more than 1,300 NGOs pushed through the global Land Mine Treaty in 1996 in record time and won the Nobel Peace Prize. The broad Jubilee 2000 coalition pressured the G7 countries to the unpayable debt of poorest countries. This past February, we witnessed worldwide mobilizations for peace, without precedent in history. Signs of the times. International civil society is growing and challenging global power.

I conclude from this that, to combat poverty, violence and environmental decay, we have to make this the Century of Solidarity, especially international solidarity. As elites extend their power through globalized markets, finance and communications, the response can only be to globalize the practice of love. Wise as serpents, we will need to enlist the Internet, e-mail and discount air fares in the cause. We have no precise blueprint for a more just and humane society today and no clear road from here to there. But one thing is certain. There will be no new societies unless we have new human beings capable of identifying with the cause of the world's majorities, committed and savvy people prepared to hang in there over the long haul. That will have to include people in rich countries who know about trade, finance, government and human rights law. They are indispensable; I mean people with hearts that respond to the suffering and heads trained to address the complex mechanisms that generate victims. Without a critical mass of such people, I see no way out of the spreading poverty, violence and environmental destruction that threaten us all. Although important strides have been made, we are a long way from the solidarity movement we need to do battle for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Where will people like this come from? If they don't come from universities in countries like the U.S., especially Catholic and Jesuit colleges and universities, I don't know where they will come from. Universities like this one should play a signal role in the formation of a new generation of international solidarity -- people who live for others, especially for the crucified majorities in the poor countries of the world.<sup>17</sup> Citizens of the world's only super-power have a special responsibility to help take these crucified peoples down from their crosses, as Ellacuría put it.<sup>18</sup>

So, there is hope for my middle-class people. Try this little quiz. What do the following have in common: Dorothy Day, Mohandas Gandhi, Che Guevara, Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King, Simone Weil, Karl Marx? Answer: They were all well-educated and from middle-class or well-to-do backgrounds. While we may not agree with everything that all of them stood for, they

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<sup>17</sup> Of course, there are plenty of poor and suffering people in the U.S.; and we must take that with utmost seriousness, not only the suffering of poor inner-city neighborhoods and neglected rural communities, but also the deep pain of the affluent suburbs and the anguished professional. At the same time, we should appreciate how that suffering is intimately tied up with the kind of societies we live in. The suffering of the non-poor is intimately related to the suffering of the poor, at both the national and the international level. The grave social problems of the U.S. are tied to past and present U.S. foreign policy and its negative impact on poor countries. Not only do the poor of the world need help from people in the rich world in liberating themselves; citizens of rich countries need reconciliation with them, to be healed of their own ills.

<sup>18</sup> This responsibility has a political dimension. We all disagree with the U.S. teaching torture and the subversion of democracy at the School of the Americas and all the sordid policies which our government has carried out in poor countries. Many of us disagree with skewed economic policies imposed by the U.S. and its allies through the international lending agencies and the unfair trade practices imposed on poor nations. But is it enough to quietly disagree? These policies are carried out in our name and with our tax dollars. When do silence and inaction amount to a complicity?

were able to put their talents and training at the service of people in need. So, while we need the poor, they also need us. There is hope for my tribe and plenty to do [for those who have the sense of vocation to do it.

#### **A Fifth Higher Standard: Who Gets In?**

While we must be concerned with what kind of person leaves our universities, we must also be concerned about who gets in. With all the complexities of enrollment management, a Catholic and Jesuit university has to dedicate financial and human resources to assuring that poor and minority students can share in the privileges we enjoy. We must meet that higher standard, as well.

#### **A Sixth Higher Standard: Keeping Faith**

In an age marked by crises of traditions and identities, we have to fear for the future of faith when people graduate from college with first-class training in physics and business administration but a first-communion, or Newsweek, understanding of the faith. A Catholic university must be a place where the Catholic tradition is studied critically, understood and presented to students. Students need to understand other faith-traditions, as well. An authentic Catholic focus will also ensure that people of other faiths, and of no faith, are first-class citizens of the university community. These, too, are “higher standards” for Catholic higher education.

#### **A Seventh Higher Standard: *Proyección Social***

The six Jesuit priests and two women who were murdered in El Salvador in 1989 died because Jesuits and their colleagues had put the UCA at the service of the poor in an unjust society and at the service of peace in a time of war.<sup>19</sup> They did this, as they said, *universitariamente*, that is, by doing the work proper to a university, not that of a church, a political party or some other kind of organization.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> On the UCA killings, see Martha Doggett, *Death Foretold: The Jesuit Murders in El Salvador* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press/Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1993).

This is the most thorough account of the killings, the cover-up, the legal case and the political implications. Teresa Whitfield treats the wider story masterfully in her *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Temple University Press, 1995). For a concise chronicle, see Dean Brackley, “A Murder in the University: A Chronicle of Events,” in idem, *The University and Its Martyrs: Hope from Central America* (San Salvador: Centro Mons. Romero, 2004), pp. 6-24.

<sup>20</sup> The writings of murdered university president Ignacio Ellacuría on higher education have been collected in Ignacio Ellacuría, *Escritos universitarios* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1999). See also the book by Ellacuría’s predecessor as university president, Román Mayorga, *La universidad para el cambio social*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1976). In English, see the articles by Ellacuría and Ignacio Martín-Baró in Hassett and Lacey (eds.), *Towards a Society That Serves Its People* (note 13, above), Section III. The University and Social Justice, pp. 171-242. For the history and educational philosophy of the UCA, see Charles J. Beirne, S.J., *Jesuit Education and Social Change in El Salvador* (New York: Garland, 1996). For a concise presentation of

At the UCA in San Salvador, we pursue the goal of the university by means of teaching and research and what we call *proyección social*. This last; social projection, includes all those means by which the university communicates, or *projects* knowledge beyond the campus to help shape the consciousness of the wider society. Projecting the truth includes unmasking the lies which maintain a profoundly unjust status quo, denouncing abuses and making constructive proposals for solutions. *Proyección social* is considered the most important function of our university in a society which is so unjust and whose population receives less than six years of schooling, on average. *Proyección social* is carried out through public speaking, including appearances in the media, publications, the work of the Human Rights Institute (founded by Segundo Montes), Institute for Public Opinion (founded by Ignacio Martín-Baró), the Pastoral Center, the university radio and other instruments.

Nine months after the killings at the UCA, John Paul II published his exhortation on Catholic higher education, *Ex corde ecclesiae*. In the U.S., it has stirred controversy over whether Catholic identity threatens free inquiry. But the document presents other challenges which have received less attention, and which echo the UCA's option for the poor, its focus on the study of *la realidad*, and *proyección social*. *Ex corde* says of the Catholic university that its research activities will . . . include study of *serious contemporary problems*, such as the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of the natural environment, the search for peace and political stability, a more equitable distribution of world resources and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at the national and international level. University research will have to be directed toward in-depth study of the roots and causes of the grave problems of our time . . .

The document states that "The Christian spirit of service to others in *promoting social justice* is especially important for each Catholic university and should be shared by professors and fomented among students." The university should help promote the development of the poor countries of the world. Finally, the Catholic university must "demonstrate the courage to express uncomfortable truths, truths that may clash with public opinion but that are also necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society" (no. 32). The Jesuits at the UCA were killed for just that. They publicly attacked abuse and unmasked the official lies during the civil war. They understood this to be, at least in that context, the principle service that the university was providing to society.

The question can no longer be whether a Catholic university should promote justice or engage in *proyección social*, but *how* it should do so. According to *Ex corde*, social projection and the promotion of justice are higher standards of Catholic higher education. What form should this take in a U.S. context so different from Central America? First of all, social projection is already being done here, and it might be a wholesome exercise to list the forms it already takes at

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the philosophy of education at the UCA, see Dean Brackley, "The Challenge of the UCA," in *The University and Its Martyrs*, pp. 25-42.

this university – and what other forms it might take.

What about taking a stand, as a university, on vital public issues of the day? Catholic universities already do this. Though they are careful about how to do so, they can and rightly do take public stands on moral issues like abortion. Should this university community call for an end to the death penalty? Should it denounce the war in Iraq as immoral? Speak out against torture which, in practice, has turned out to be policy for this government? Should it criticize the domestic policies of the Bush administration which, perhaps more than any other in our history, has favored the wealthy at the expense of the poor and the weak and repeatedly demonstrated contempt for the rule of law. Like Archbishop Romero, whose twenty-fifth anniversary we commemorate this year, the UCA martyrs spoke out on such issues. The university took positions. In this context, I am not sure who speaks for the university and just what process is appropriate when doing so. Wisdom is needed here, of course, but also daring. Martin Luther King chided the decent standers-by: I know where you stand on prudence; I don't know where you stand on courage.

### **Conclusion**

Like many individuals and institutions today, Jesuit colleges and universities are struggling to define their mission in the twenty-first century. The Society of Jesus, the Marymount sisters, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, and the Church itself consider the pursuit of justice to be an essential part of their educational mission. This new emphasis presents us with the exciting challenge of fashioning a new kind of university, building on the best of the rich heritage of Catholic education. Powerful currents inside and outside the university resist the creative efforts that this demands. I think we need to be convinced that when the university gives priority to values -- justice and life itself – it promotes the search for truth more rigorously. When the university stands with the victims, when it struggles to overcome bias and to help students discover their vocation, it is committing itself to that greater academic excellence which produces wisdom. That may invite persecution and financial sacrifice, at least in the short term. It may entail a loss of prestige in the eyes of the world. At the UCA, this kind of commitment has provoked controversy 18 bombs, threats and death. But that commitment will provide a stronger identity and a deeper sense of mission we can expect to redound to the greater glory of God and the good of souls.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your reactions and further exploration of these ideas during some of the remaining events of your Mission Week.

Loyola Marymount University  
January 25, 2005

