II MEETING
OF DEPARTMENTS OF COMMUNICATION OF UNIVERSITIES
INSPIRED BY THE MESSAGE OF ST JOSEMARIA
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INTRODUCTION
EMBODYING AND COMMUNICATING THE UNIVERSITY'S CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

1. Purpose of the meeting

In 2009 Pamplona saw a first meeting on the spreading of the Christian identity by universities inspired in the message of St Josemaría, and which have therefore a clear evangelizing orientation. The meeting was for the directors of the departments of institutional communication, under the acronym REDECOM. Six years later the Chancellor of this University invites us to re-study the question: first because it is strictly related to the very foundational raison d'être of each university, and second because it needs to be re-elaborated from *within* present-day circumstances.

In continuity with the 2009 meeting, the general purpose of this meeting is to reflect on how to maintain the Christian identity at the centre of the activity of institutional communication. Your desire ought to be to serve the Church and society faithfully. The task is to be carried out from the specificity proper to the university, with ways of acting and communicating different from those of a parish, a Catholic NGO aiming at immediate action or a secondary school.

At times, daily activities and urgent matters don't leave much room to talk about more important issues. Also, it is not easy to find valid interlocutors with whom to exchange experiences on this topic. That's why I think that the directors of communication gathered here ought to be especially grateful to Msgr Echevarría for the initiative.

The second, more specific, target, will be to analyze some challenges (at least in western culture) issuing from the increasing conflict between legality and morality. At times they cause tensions for which one ought to be alert and prepared. We shall hear more about this in the next session.

2. Reflecting on the Christian identity

How is Christian identity perceived among students and teaching staff, and among the rest of the personnel? How is it recognized in my geographical milieu? What are its consequences in the day-to-day work at the university? How does it manifest itself in the attitude of the teaching and administrative staff? What mark does it leave on others? How is it perceived by the opinion makers of my city? These are questions that the management team of a Catholicinspired university ought to ask themselves frequently, at least as often as questions that have to do with the survival of the university (future students, economic situation, educational laws).

The spreading of the Christian identity of a university has a double dimension: a) the first is fundamentally personal. Here one can place many stories of persons that have come closer to God or to the Church, or that become more supportive from the moment they come into contact with such endeavours. A context of freedom and love for truth facilitates attaining the fullness of one's human and spiritual vocation; b) there exists, further, an institutional dimension of great importance, public as well as cultural. As St Josemaría says, ***These centres are undoubtedly sources which […] open to people of all classes and conditions, have made many sectors of society appreciate the need for offering a Christian solution to the problems that arise in the exercise of their profession or job.***[1] St Josemaría speaks about ***giving a Christian answer***, i.e. effectively contributing a Christian view in solving the problems of our time. The

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[1] Conversations 18

university is a key place from where to launch constructive proposals, because it does not drag the burden of the party system and of other factions. It is the common home, *a place of study and friendship, a place where people who hold different opinions –which in each period are expressions of the legitimate pluralism that exists in society- may live together in peace.[2]*

Our Chancellor also refers to this "public" dimension in his letter *The Year of Faith and the New Evangelization* (29th September 2012). Addressing those who dedicate themselves to the university, he reminds them that their professional task places them "on the vanguard of the new evangelization", and exhorts them (17) to consider the words of Jesus "*you are the light of the world*" as particularly addressed to them.

In nn.61-67 of *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis points out some presently more urgent cultural challenges, part and parcel of the new evangelization: from subjectivism, which makes it difficult for citizens to undertake common projects which do not produce material benefits, or which satisfy no personal desire, and hence are easy prey to relativism or fundamentalism, to the "use and throw away" mentality, where the real gives way to appearances, to externals, to instant gratification; from secularization that reduces the faith and the Church to the private and personal sphere to the belief in the absolute rights of the individual.

At the end of this description, the Pope underlines the noteworthy contribution of the universities. Then he reminds them of this important connotation: "When we raise questions that are less popular, we do it out of fidelity to the same convictions about human dignity and the common good." That is to say, in Benedict XVI's concept, we do not defend a confessional interest, but an ethic, universal one.

The aim is lofty. We try to attain it with the optimism that Pope Francis inspires us with his "outward" movement and with the sense of responsibility that our Chancellor inspires us when he reminds us, in the previously quoted letter, the call to the university "to be leaven, to give out the light and warmth of the Gospel to friends, colleagues and students to imbue their soul and their actions with the Good News of Christ (17). Msgr Echevarría also reminds us that "God does not want to win by force, but convince by love, counting on the free and enthusiastic collaboration of others", (47) and that in this battle of charity we are "instruments in God's hands, to serve the entire world despite our personal littleness." (48).

3. Communicating the Christian Identity

Reflecting on our Christian identity, we realize that contributing to the new evangelization and to the regeneration of social life (seeking *Christian answers*) are not additions to a Catholic-inspired university, but part and parcel of its mission.

Such considerations give an ample perspective to our work. The function of a university does not end with the offering of certain services; it includes an ampler and more exciting horizon, intimately connected to human happiness.

To delve into the Christian identity is a priority, in teaching and research as much as in the university's internal and external communication.

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[2] Ibid. 76

a)   This identity acts as a motor of teaching and research. It is not a question of eliminating things that contradict faith or morals; teaching and research have to be centres of irradiation, fire that produces heat and warmth. It is a question of protecting in a special way contents that most directly promote the good of the person, of society, of the country. It is a question of identifying the key issues and developing them in depth and with constancy. The teachings of the Gospels and the papal Magisterium are guides to identify relevant and urgent issues, such as the family in society and in the world, from a multidisciplinary perspective including anthropology, the law, economics, philosophy, theology, or the eradication of any form of material and spiritual poverty.

b)   In communication it is a question of adequately transmitting the Christian ethos of the educational project first inwards (as is already done today through formation programs directed at new lecturers in all your universities, and many other ways that you can share) and then outwards. This task ought to be promoted in unison by the Department of Communication with the corresponding organs of government. It should enlighten all the phases of the communication process: from spelling out the inspirational program to the criteria for choosing the photographs of the website or of the institutional publications. All of you may have read the study published in *Romana* n.54 (Universities with a Christian inspiration: identity, culture, communication); in some way it is the result of a previous edition of REDECOM, and tackles the duo communication-Christian identity.

Such a communicative activity introduces fundamental ethical and anthropological questions into the "national conversation": the value of family stability, the priority of the person over technology, of being over doing, etc. At the same time the identity of each institution is reinforced, internal cohesion is promoted, and the foundational inspiration is revived. Indirectly, a consistent communication of one's identity (at once committed and free, respectful before the plurality of offers by the universities) also becomes a strong value of differentiation and promotion.

A meeting like the present one is an excellent forum where to share experiences on how adequately to transmit the Christian identity, outwards and inwards, and as part of this identity, adequately to inform on the university's relation with Opus Dei. From a perspective of transparency, make sure that all those who pass through one such institution receive complete information on the identity of the university. It is a specific task of the Communication Department, for it is a fundamental datum that sheds light on the whole process of formation. The experience is that if these questions are not spelled out, a false impression of a hidden agenda is given.

From the qualitative point of view, it is said that the best communication is the one that is reflected in actions: the connection between the university and the Christian spirit is better understood, as is that between the university and Opus Dei, when people feel treated respectfully, when they personally sense the spirit of freedom, the daily professional competence, but above all when they perceive that they are loved.

4. The 2009 conclusion as a starting point

We shall dedicate the final part of this introduction to a number of conclusions of Redecom 2009. First was the need to "integrate ideas and values that the institution wish to spread through

the strategy and ordinary activities of the Communication Department." It is obvious that each institution, given its geographic and cultural diversity, will have to progress on this line from the reality of its milieu and public. Nevertheless, in the conclusions of Redecom 2009 some common elements were underlined, succinctly repeated here to summarize some key ideas and serve as a starting point for these days:

1. The Christian identity and apostolic mission make up an essential aspect of the institution, where all collaborate: management board, lecturers and employees. Remember that the university or the department not only communicate through the official channels , but also by what each and every one of its employees does, which has to be consistent with the principles of the university.

2. In this sense, the underlying ideas ought to be made known first within the university itself. It must be first-class information, as a response to the right to be informed of those who study and work in these institutions, and who have freely chosen to be there.

3. Likewise the underlying ideas, - in the concrete aspects like the search for truth, the synthesis of knowledge, the service to the person and to society - must be seen outwards. The individual acts of communication – press communiqués, opinion articles, events, etc. –should express such values. Great professionalism is required to communicate positive values stemming from the Christian identity clearly and attractively.

4. All the projects of the Department of Communication (blogs, brochures, publications, videos) ought to be imbued with this Christian identity, reflecting it immediately, integrally, unequivocally, clearly and transparently. This requires an attentive choice of topics (family, education, solidarity, life, peace, science, ecology among others); a rigorous approach, as proper to a university; and also taking care of the style, both in the text and in the images. Content, approach and style facilitate the correct communication of the Christian identity.

5. Besides the traditional means of communication, it is recommended to seek channels of "global conversation" (fora, networks, communities). For instance, the institutional web page is one of the most adequate places where present and future students, employees and journalists look for information on the underlying ideas of the institution: to reflect the Christian spirit that animates its activities, and to introduce our proposals on how to improve society.

6. All the acts of communication ought to keep in mind the interlocutors, who live in a very varied cultural milieu. The language and the channel of communication used need to be adequate to the specific characteristics and needs of the public to which they are addressed.

Let us ask the Holy Spirit that these hours of work be fruitful, and may He help us in this wide task of service to souls and society. At the same time, for the peace of mind of all here present, let us recall that the leap we are asked to take will not be the result of a strategy planned in its smallest details, but has a lot to do with the dough spoken of in the Gospel, and on which Msgr Echevarría goes into great detail in his letter on the new evangelization (n. 47): it depends rather on the good example of men and women who, with the help of grace, practice their faith with naturalness and continually account for their hope (1 P 3:15).

COMMUNICATION OF UNIVERSITIES WITH A CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE "NEW RIGHTS"

Marc Carroggio

1. Present Framework

In this second session we shall tackle some aspects of the social context which have changed since 2009, and which pose important challenges in the institutional communication of educational centres with a Catholic identity. What has changed since Redecom 2009? From the partial perspective of my Roman vantage point I would mark three factors that facilitate and three that hinder Christian identity.

The three positive ones, which act as a fulcrum are: a) a greater sympathy towards the Church thanks to the gesture of Benedict XVI and the testimony of Francis, as well as the welfare work carried out in various countries during the economic crisis; b) a greater awareness of the crisis: economic, cultural, of identity, with a replacement of old values, for example the boom of anti-system parties; a general tiredness with corruption and ideology, together with a deep desire for solutions more oriented towards the common good; c) the arising of new public creative proposals. During these years different models have appeared, not political or confessional, but across boundaries promoting fundamental values. An emblematic case is the French *Manif pour Tous*: the right of children to have a father and a mother has succeeded in uniting Catholic, Jews, Protestants, atheists, fathers and mothers, and civil organizations including some homosexual ones against the possibility of gay couples adopting children.

The three that hinder Christian identity, and that are a challenge, are: a) the expansion of a new legal framework (with its cultural and communicative framework) that consecrate as inalienable rights issues that up to ten years ago were perceived as wrong , and which are contrary to the teaching of the Gospel. They are the so-called "new rights" or "extended rights" related to the identity of gender or bioethics: e.g. compulsory euthanasia in a Christian university hospital; b) all the above which causes a sensation of lack of freedom to dissent; the imposition of a sort of "spiral of silence" in a large scale, in some countries together with a public stigma of everything religious as suspected non-scientific, or non-shareable; the new laws are accompanied by "anti-discriminatory" norms, which together with some praiseworthy aspects act as a clamp on the system (everything is permitted, except what these laws consider "discriminatory"); c) an increasing climate of public immorality and violence (increased of late by "religious flag-waving terrorism").

In many places there has been a drastic change from a cultural model favouring the Christian conception of man (an evangelized society) to its opposite. In this context, as the Pope says, it is necessary to re-think how to get out and complete our university mission. This ought to be done in a way that connects with the new sensitivity and with what today's people expect.

2. Conflictive situations in educational centres with a Catholic worldview

The context just described generates tensions in centres with a Catholic worldview (universities, colleges, hospitals, etc.) which in practice suffer the consequences of the clash between the moral and the legal planes. In some countries hospitals are under great pressure to carry out ethically unacceptable operations; in others, teachers may not express their opinions

on anthropological issues, because so-called laws of "promotion of diversity" classify as offences the teachings of natural morality, which the Magisterium has made its own, etc. A pastry cook in Colorado received a condemnatory sentence for refusing to prepare a cake promoting gender ideology. And this injustice can go as far as to endanger the very existence of a centre or service that out of respect for one's conscience avoids certain demands of this new concept of legality.[3]

From the point of view of public opinion, this new legality and sensitivity are a minefield. One who approaches a mine carelessly, risks losing hands or legs, thus becoming useless to change the ground and improve it.

Between 2009 and 2015 many of you have been involved – without intending it, beginning from an external provocation – in communication explosions. And you have verified that such extended explosions or conflicts can go so far as to scorch the ground: if not stopped in time, they hinder the ordinary Christian formative mission, place us on the defensive, silence the "voice" of the institution and the possibility of offering new solutions. Scorched earth takes time to recover. Furthermore, prolonged polemics generate misrepresentations about the university, about the Church and Opus Dei (accused of being ultimately responsible for the issue). Neither of the two recognizes itself in the final picture coming out of such "crisis" of communication. One who intends to make of one's life a sowing of peace and joy ends up, paradoxically, getting associated to polemics not of one's own making.

Episodes that have violently exploded in the public opinion between 2009 and 2015 have had to do with gender ideology. In some cases the instigators have been students or employees; in others, they were due to answers to requests for institutional opinions; in others, because activists or journalists asked whether the university would hire lecturers with a certain "sexual" identity. Some answers that paid little attention to the legal and communication framework provoked media and political reactions that led to losing control of the situation: they forced declarations (upon public request by some authorities or by some group) that could have been avoided in normal circumstances, and that can create public confusion, problems of reputation, unease in persons of the institution and other collateral damage.

Before such situations, it is encouraging to see work groups arise in various universities. They work from an all round perspective (scientific, employment, communication) and deal with individual and institutional objection of conscience, freedom of expression, religious freedom, discrimination, the right to work and freedom to hire personnel. They are leaven at the service of the common good for millions of people. These groups –which in some universities are called "committees for public affairs" - reflect on juridical and communication support tools that are available: statutes, worldviews, communication plans, etc. The first request I hope to make is giving priority to such medium and long term projects. It means working with wide horizons, thinking on the future, with a positive mentality, towards promising democratically cultural changes in legislation and in public opinion, contributing other solutions more in agreement with human dignity, since lack of respect for it does not favour the common good.

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[3] *Catholic Care* had to close down in England to maintain its Catholic identity. The 2007 Equality Act obliged it to give children into adoption to homosexual couples.

These topics are being repeated cyclically. They affect the Christian identity of the universities; they pose important questions on how positively to propose the university's worldview (which coincides with the values of the Gospel) without compromising in moral issues and avoiding hurting people. Hence, without making a monograph of the topic, we have to consider making use of Redecom to share some experiences. We shall summarize them into two groups: short and long term.

3. Short term: limiting the risk

The context of the "new rights" first demands measures directed at limiting the risk. It is as if moving in a minefield, deactivating explosive devices.

In second place I would request this: be prepared; keep at hand "action protocols" and trained people. In other words, have ready practical guidelines on how to avoid unnecessary stirrings of public opinion and on how to face the inevitable ones, limiting secondary damage as much as possible.

From the point of view of communication, the crises or controversies mentioned have almost identical elements: the same triggering factors, and very similar reactions and effects. From such observations one can make nine recommendations, in case they help to prepare lines of actions (complementary to those that appear in common literature on the prevention and management of crises). It is therefore useful to qualify all of this, incorporating other experiences that we can share during the discussions.

First: mark out the territory. Categorically assert that no one will be discriminated against. Give reasons in a pleasant fashion for not going into unnecessary details about the topic and straying into outside territory. For example:

a. There is no desire to brand people by reducing them to their sexuality: every person is much more than that;
b. In hiring interviews no questions are asked about intimate issues; hundreds of other factors are valued in relation to the academic curriculum, previous working experience, professional profile, etc.
c. The university looks for people who collaborate in its educational project;
d. There is a healthy pluralism among those who make up the university: there is ethnic, religious, political diversity, etc.

Experience teaches us that a press interview is not the most adequate opportunity to give "Christian doctrine" on issues of sexual identity; it may have to happen, but it is preferable if it is done in a different place and time. While maintaining full fidelity to Christian doctrine, a key point is not to let oneself be cornered. When this topic comes out in a forum, if one is not an expert, it may end up dominating the event, thus distorting our public identity as if this topic was central in our agenda. It is better for experts to tackle this and similar questions with their know-how. It is also good to give such questions exclusive treatment: when they appear together with other issues, almost always the thing ends up badly, as they need plenty of time and large amounts of qualifications. Positive cooperation with the media, which is part and parcel of a shared culture, does not mean yielding to all their requirements: there are rules in the game, and the first is not to stray from one's territory.

Second: connect with universal points of reference. Even though they are topics of natural ethics, attainable rationally, in communication it is effective to recall that the Gospel message inspires the university. What the Catechism says about such topics is well known, as it emphasizes values that are also part of the Christian identity, such as respect and no discrimination. Referring to the Catechism clarifies who we are and helps overcome isolation: we Catholics are 1200 million.

Third: applying the professional criteria of institutional communication. The golden rule is: preparation, preparation, preparation. The entire reflection and study previous to uttering anything is a worthwhile investment of time. This means paying attention to every interview and public intervention on such topics, even though on a modest medium; revising all the opinions given on behalf of the university. Another manifestation of professionalism is to identify and alert professors who perhaps lack sensitivity or knowledge of the issue. With all the good intention, they may fall into what today's sensitivity perceives as an attack or lack of respect. It is not to urge them to keep silent, but to speak with one voice: multi-disciplined, co-ordinated, clear, filtered through charity (based on self knowledge and a real possibility of expressing opinions as an expert in complex issues, or based on one's social legitimacy if talking from a perspective of values).

Fourth: dissenting by means of an inclusive, respectful language. Of late we have learned that an unfortunate word (anomaly, illness) is enough to unleash a hurricane of news. When dealing with these topics it can help thinking of those who try to live according to Church doctrine – homosexual people can be saints, they are not an excluding category per se – or of a brother who may have such tendency. On the other hand, a key point is to arrive at a unity of language: speak inside with the same respect with which we would speak outside. Let there not be an external discourse (apparently more acceptable) and another internal (less charitable): if we don't succeed in making the internal discourse serve as a basis for the external one, we neither facilitate nor form the people towards positively influencing the public forum. The attitude that most defines the communication of a Christian is the respect for the human person even when criticizing (see the example of numerous Syrian and Iraqi refugees: it is like a house brand). In any public debate, respect is the first argument of a Christian. And there we have the opportunity to be leaders: looking for a language that is truthful and charitable.

Fifth: thinking first of the insiders out of justice and efficacy: if they are well informed, spokespeople multiply and it becomes easier to spread a clear, sensible and charitable message. In some of the latest cases, a rector's letter to the academic community has proved to be an excellent instrument, even for communication with the outside world.

Sixth: establishing alliances centered on values. When promoting values seen as controversial, there is no worse enemy than isolation. Experience clearly says: never be alone. Form alliances always with like-minded people. It is better to lose immediate incisiveness in a controversy if one has the advantage of a chorus of varied and numerous voices. A good choir needs baritones, basses, tenors and sopranos. If it is not possible to count on some of them before the controversy explodes, later it will be impossible to change public perception by a single millimeter. In promoting certain values it is desirable to go hand in hand with other universities or professors, with the Episcopal conference and representatives of other religions, with NGOs and organizations of civil society, with people of opposing tendencies, etc.

Seventh: hit the nail on the head with the first institutional statement. The events described have taught us that the first answer is the most important. What follows will aim at reenforcing and completing it, or in trying to correct it. In the din of battle it is easy to act in a rush. The media exert pressure and we answer to a public (communication media, politicians, activists) while forgetting others (academic community, the Catholics of the country, people of good will), with a hurried and partial diagnosis. Together with apologies for the error committed and for any perceived lack of respect, make sure of not allowing any expression not in keeping with our Christian identity, which is the main value we want to manage.

This kind of "error" is the most frequent, committed out of nervousness and lack of time, and the most difficult to correct. It is so common, that experts have dubbed it as "second order crisis". It is therefore advisable to delay a little the initial reaction and check with trustworthy people, perhaps with those who have passed through similar situations, until reaching a public statement expressing one's values fully.

Eighth: make good use of moments of crisis. Every well-managed crisis is an occasion for growth; in many cases it serves to identify questions belonging to the Catholic worldview but not spelled out, to explain them fully and to unite professors and students around the educational project. This work is crucial after each crisis: repairing, re-establishing relations, explaining. One improves on how to communicate one's identity.

Ninth: ask for help. For delicate moments (prevention, crisis) as well as for spreading the key ideas, it could be useful to count on external consultants who are real specialists and share in the values. We are very grateful for the experience of professionals from the University of Navarre, the Universidad Austral and other institutions who, after experiencing situations like the ones just described, willingly and professionally advice other universities. It would also be worth spreading this experience among institutions with a clear ideology, with which we keep in touch and that perceive the challenge of the new legal and cultural context in the same way (a Protestant university, a diocesan curia, a Jewish hospital, schools, etc.).

4. Long term: communicating the "Christian identity" in all its extent

The present-day context, open to new solutions, demands that we be more explicit about our key ideas: they are our factor of cohesion, of differentiation, in a context of free choice and a plurality of educational offers in our country. A key point is to contemplate this identity as an aggregating factor, positive and differentiating at once.

In the same way as we submit to an economic audit, internal or external, we should think of a "Christian identity" audit, to see what aspect needs reinforcing or better explaining in each moment, or begin initiatives that show better our happy and hopeful Christian identity.

In this task let us think that the majority of the Christian messages are very widely accepted: love for truth, consistency, peace, respect, man-woman equality, social justice, poverty reduction, ecology, the authentic sense of human love, etc. They are a fundamental part of our Christian identity. Their constant spreading, in quantity and quality, help us to be recognized by what we are. Furthermore, it places the knottier issues –values where we navigate more against the current – in their ampler context of service and search for the common good.

Clearly, the Holy Spirit leads the Church and Christians where it is most convenient in each moment. In this sense it is not by chance that the two latest pontificates have concentrated so much on the communication of charity, the central content of the Gospel. Benedict XVI expressed it most neatly in *Deus Caritas Est*. Pope Francis has been making use of his expression "neighbourliness" as a major line of his pontificate, helping us to understand power and leadership, including the intellectual one, as service to one's neighbour.

This is the third and last petition I wished to make: planning our work of institutional communication starting with the central feature of our Christian identity: charity. This presupposes, obviously, placing charity – as an expression of faith – at the centre of the university's Christian identity, and as a collective responsibility, not just of the department of communication.

Charity is the central feature of an educational work related to Opus Dei, and to its Christian identity. It is so in the ampler sense of service to others (students, colleagues, society), as much as in the specific aspect of attention to those most in need. How to detect this in a business school, in a faculty of communication or of economics? What can we do not to let this remain a mere theoretical desire? For this reason too we shall dedicate one practical session to the "Solidarity Time Bank" of the host University, and other initiatives that are characteristic of these universities, even though are not so well known.

Regarding this topic, it may be useful to re-read a 2012 conference delivered by the Chancellor on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the canonization of St Josemaría. The title is "The Christian heart, engine of social development" (website of St Josemaría or Romana n.55). Msgr Echevarría reminds us of some permanent ideas, which lighten up everything, for instance "charity, right love, is not only the centre of Christian life, but also of human existence *tout court*, and that "if we want to bring about a more human society, more worthy of the person, it is necessary to give the necessary importance to social charity, for it to inspire, purify and ennoble all the human, political and economic links."

The present-day context requires that each institution gives greater emphasis to spreading the truth from the point of view of charity. It may need to be spelled out for each faculty, school or department. For example: medicine (life) economics (justice, development), residence (solidarity), architecture (sustainability, housing), biology (ecology); communication (coexistence, respect); etc. Let us gain a new public sympathy around this concept, widening the understanding of our identity and ordering it starting from the essential aspects, without being in the defensive. If one is perceived as a defender of children and of the marginalized, his action in favour of life will be all the more effective than if he is remembered as one "who struggles against." Such flow of sympathy gives us an influence on fundamental questions in public debate, also in more difficult topics, with the help of many more people.

I beg your pardon if the session has touched on too many topics. Let me repeat, in concluding, the three petitions referred to: first, favouring an interdisciplinary reflection (scientific, juridical and communicative) on the potentially threatening aspects of the new legality, which require new solutions in accordance with the new sensitivity; a specific way could be setting up of a "committee of public affairs"; secondly, preparing practical guidelines to help forestall unnecessary crisis of public opinion, taking into account the legislation of the country, the Christian identity and present-day sensitivity (we have given nine examples); lastly, re-setting

the university's institutional work of communication (which we do every time there is a meeting such as this) around the central axis of Christian identity of the university: charity, and service to others.

COMMUNICATING THE SYMPHONY OF TRUTH: PUBLIC SPEAKING, CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND VALUES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Juan Pablo Cannata, Universidad Austral

Cultural and legislative changes have taken place of late in many western countries. Institutions with a Christian identity have to cope with changes that make up the context of communication, so as to develop and share values in the post-secular public milieu. To offer a "symphony of truth" and express it through actions and speech is the way of establishing positive relations and contributing values of one's own to those of a society belonging to all.

> *Truth is like a precious stone:*
> *It seduces when held in the hand*
> *But hurts when received in the face.*
> *Jorge Bergoglio*

Words are increasingly important. American consultant Frank Luntz says that during the presidential campaign for the US President, someone accused Barack Obama of being "the candidate of words". The retort of the then Democratic Senator was forceful: "They say words don't matter. I had a dream: are they just words?" Words change history, found countries, mobilize multitudes, unite people in marriage, declare some guilty and others innocent, expel or welcome, and express what one bears in one's heart. Andrew Mitchell, British MP, lost his political seat after calling a security guard "plebeian". A speech on "why women are poor in science" forced the resignation of Larry Summers, president of Harvard: of course a woman succeeded him in his post. Pope Francis caused an international stir by saying that the Armenian massacre was the first genocide of the 20th Century. We live in a world of words: if it is important in any milieu, it is particularly so in public debates on values. They are times of change; with Frédéric Martel one can say that globalization is not only economic, but also one of values. Such values affect us all and are on everyone's lips, they cross cultures and geographical boundaries, flood the pages of the dailies, parliaments, courts of law and cafes.

1. The new legal and communication context

One of the latest characteristics is the consolidation of a cultural and juridical framework where certain values, fundamental until not so long ago for many, are now questioned by increasingly large sectors of society. In many countries there occurs a complex process of social change, legalized in a number of them, that affects the core identity of persons and groups, particularly educational and welfare centres: hospitals, health centres, soup kitchens, homes for the elderly. This scenario poses questions and challenges about a pluralistic society and its capacity to accommodate different conceptions of what is good serenely. The novelty can be resumed into a question: how to contribute to the common good when there is doubt, or downright denial, that the very proposals are social goods?

This new legal context arises in parallel with a new communication milieu, producing noteworthy changes in public debates about values. In a very short time there has arisen a surfeit of speakers, issues, social situations and possible registers, thanks to the proliferation of social

networks and the spreading of smart phones. Today it is much easier to insert a speech in a public forum because it is not necessary to go through the filter of a newspaper editor or of a television producer. Anyone can register a situation hitherto private or semipublic and insert it into a milieu of world consumption. What happens in a classroom or in a bus can become a national trend and appear on the evening news that very day. The potentiality of the digital world has democratized what is being said, at the same time reducing or minimizing intimacy and privacy.

2. The spiral of silence v. the symphony of truth

The change of milieu is a reality with objective consequences. We tend to adopt what we judge to be the majority opinion. On the contrary, we find it difficult to declare our stand when we perceive that the majority of those surrounding us think the opposite, which ends up in a spiral of silence.[4] The sensation of unanimity possesses a factual forcefulness. Whoever confronts a current of growing opinion will suffer a hostile pressure. If a group of football fans or an official publicly criticizes a player for being an Afro American, all politicians and opinion leaders will feel urged to issue public negative judgements of the authors of the discrimination, and if it is expedient propose sanctions against them. It happened to Donald Sterling, owner of the franchise of Los Angeles Clippers of the NBA, who was fined and punished for uttering offensive statement against Afro American players.

The cultural and social change sets up new criteria of public judgement of behaviour and declarations. This challenge increases the need for the "symphony of truth".[5] From the Christian point of view, Benedict XVI said, what has been lost is a unitary cultural fabric around "the values inspired in the faith". Therefore proposals with values are received out of context, without context or in different contexts. Interpretations are incomplete, equivocal or out of all proportion. A Catholic speaker intending to live up to his identity and richness of his message must be capable of expressing the truth symphonically, articulating various levels and differences in order of relevance, avoiding turning a secondary value into an absolute one, or allowing it to be perceived as a counter value because of inadequate expression. In musical terms, if the second trumpet sounds so loud as to impose itself on the first violin, outside the framework of the orchestra, a kind of absolutism results that may be appreciated by an expert, but for the general public it may well be a disagreeable noise, even if it follows the score faithfully.

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[4] See the homonymous book by Elisabeth Noelle-Neuman.

[5] This von Balthasar's expression has been used by the last three popes. "Unity, as well as truth, is symphonic. The Council pointed it out. Faith, as seen at Pentecost where the apostles speak all languages, is a symphony: plurality in unity. (Ratzinger, Zenit, 30-11-02) "Let us cooperate together in truth, which we know to be one and symphonic. It demands of each of us a constant commitment to convert to the only Lord" (Benedict XVI, Homily 29-06-12). "To use an image, we can compare the cosmos to a book, in Galileo's words, and consider it as the work of an Author expressing himself in the "symphony" of creation. Within this symphony there appears at times a "solo", instrumental or vocal, so important as to define the meaning of the whole work. This "solo" is Jesus." (Benedict XVI *Verbum Domini* 13). "The Church was born catholic, i.e. symphonic from the beginning, and cannot not be catholic, designed as it is to evangelization and to meet all. (Francis, Audience 17-9-14).

3. **Problems of legitimacy**

For historical and social reasons, it is necessary to consider the fact that large sectors of public opinion accept the fiction that Christians are intolerant and potentially discriminatory. This dark cloud floats over Catholicism, as an influence of an extended European rationalism. It forms part of the new cultural fabric, and it is one of the elements of the framework whence the Church and the institutions of Christian identity are questioned. This context generates a latent tension in public debate. The debate touches the roots of our societies, and it is formulated starting from a negative judgement: is to promote Christian values to improve the world, or is it to discriminate and hurt others? Are Christian values compatible with the plural and democratic society of the 21st Century?

If the symphony of truth fails to be conveyed, thus reducing the Christian message to a series of controversial postulates, the validity of the aforementioned questions gains in acceptance, and the mist of doubt swamps the public space. The panorama can even get worse: since the commonly shared values have diverged from Catholic ones, supporting some of them may trigger off a "communication scandal", i.e. a type of conflict that amply questions the legitimacy of the accused, jeopardizing his social survival. Since educational institutions act in a regulated framework, at times even financed by the State, they can be specifically affected by today's tensions.

The new situation presents a redistribution of legitimacies, new consents and dissents, which shape the educational context where educational centres of Catholic inspiration perform. Hence it becomes necessary to understand "a series of questionings coming from a change in mentality (Benedict XVI), and institutionally answering such questionings by going deep into the identity, engendering a culture, projects, discourses and social relations that give life to values at the service of the communities with their new questions, mentality and needs.

As the framework of shared values shrinks, the efforts at relating and self-explaining ought to increase: the gap is more pronounced. Speeches, actions, and ways of relating need to manifest one's framework of values more explicitly than before.

As a way of doing this on referring to the Church and to the acting of Christians, the Pope uses the term "field hospital". In this new context (a battle) a new answer ought to be offered: first tackle what is urgent, later go to the rest, "without renouncing the truth, goodness and the light that one can contribute when perfection is not possible" (*Evangelii Gaudium*).

In earlier stages, when a framework of common interpretation existed (Benedict XVI called it "unitary fabric") the positive contribution of the Christian teachings was seen as evident, so that a public declaration of such values could be interpreted clearly. "A" meant "A".

Nevertheless, since social knowledge and social expectations include today negative prejudice against speakers of Christian identity, such speakers can end up being considered as potential aggressors. The absence of a shared framework puts the adequate reception of the message in jeopardy, for not understanding the paradigm of the speaker.

4. Interpretational framework and the public forum

Linguist George Lakoff has explained that public conversation functions by frames and metaphors, and that the main proposal of a social message is the framework. Every particular topic and every discussion in the concrete develop in a context that determines the general position of the participants vis-à-vis the topic, conditioning the feasibility of dialogue. It is therefore necessary to ask, when speaking on a given topic, whether the framework is a shared one, or whether one accepts the interlocutor's, or whether one proposes a new one.

The process of positively sharing Christian values at the service of the common good can be done at different levels. First, there is a general framework of values (charity, human dignity, love for truth, freedom), and then a collection of Christian values more in the concrete, some of which are on the same wavelength as modern society's and others in tension with the sensitivities of the majority. The figure below is based on the Doctrinal note "*on some questions regarding the commitment and behavior of Catholics in political life*"[6] shows this triple classification: framework values, central values *in tension*, central values *in tune*. Those "in tune" are often not interpreted as Christian, because their generalization has transformed them into values perceived as belonging to all; nevertheless they form a central part of the proposals of the Gospel (for instance the care of creation, the fight against new forms of slavery, social justice or the promotion of peace). These values boost the shared "general framework" On the other hand, "values in tension" may seem or may in fact be received as being in contradiction with the general framework.

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[6] Card Ratzinger 2002

VALORES MARCO

Dignidad de la persona

Caridad cristiana

Valores centrales en *tensión* con la opinión pública

Valores centrales en *sintonía* con la opinión pública

• Familia Cristiana
• Principio y fin de la vida
• Derecho de padres y madres a educar a sus hijos e hijas en sus propios valores
• Subsidiariedad
• Ética sexual

Diálogo

Amor a la verdad

Amor a la libertad

Derechos Humanos

• Justicia social y desarrollo integral
• Liberación de las nuevas formas de esclavitud
• Cuidado del medioambiente
• Libertad religiosa
• Promoción de la paz

It is also possible to distinguish levels as regards the addressees: certain milieus find it difficult to appreciate some Church proposed values: for some it will be social justice; for others, pre-natal life; and of late, according to some recent opinion polls, those having to do with divorce or contraception.

Given the complexity, a communication of proposals should put the expression "general framework of values" in first place, proceeding to the next level only when the first one is assured. In a situation of positive communication, such as a talk to parents in a school, or in a papal audience, the "general framework' is assured, and the "values in tension" are interpreted from that framework. Along this line, Pope Francis suggests: Let us find the way of communicating Jesus that corresponds to our present-day situation."

To acknowledge this process we must realize that when controversial subjects are tackled, where a prejudice against the Church can be detected, to express oneself skillfully is a complex affair, not only due to the difficulty to enunciate the message itself but also because of the risk of how the message will be received: it is enough to remember the polemic raised in the whole world after Pope Benedict's speech on Islam at Regensburg.

A greater challenge is offered by press conferences or other situations open to the public. In some of them it is enough to speak within the "general framework", which is a good

achievement already. As Juan Manuel Mora puts it, "Communication consists precisely in making explicit what is implicit, through words and deeds". Christian identity should be made explicit as a *symphony*, not as a string of isolated elements. The first aim of a speaker on behalf of an institution of Christian identity, in other words, is to express values in the general framework.

The project Catholic Voices[7] developed a method to facilitate understanding: first level, find the shared value underlying the criticism; second level, understand the criticism itself. Thus, one develops the argument starting from the shared value.

Every situation of communication includes intrinsic aims. When the situation allows the explicit expression of one's framework of values (level 1) it is possible to offer some specific items "in tension" (level 2) reasonably expecting their being adequately understood. Even though at times it will not be possible to avoid strain for not finding shared basic values, it is always possible to introduce elements that facilitate a positive interpretation, by offering, in words and deeds, a clear and honest message on one's position, and a framework of mutual respect.

Frank Luntz insists, "It doesn't matter what you say, but what people hear". Communication improves when it is based on this law of reception and placed on the following paradigm: the important thing is what remains in the minds and hearts of the audience. In certain debates, the lack of an adequate framework can cause the message to be heard in the opposite sense (the doctrine of the Church regarding fertilization *in vitro* or same-sex marriages can be *heard* as discriminatory). On the other hand, an event celebrating the engagement of a couple in St Peter's Square on St Valentine's Day assures a positive context to promote love that does not intend to be provisional.

At the same time, there is a relation between the speaker and the message. Different situations of communication demand different qualities and abilities to skillfully communicate the "symphony of truth": the greater the public impact of the debate in which one participates, the higher ought to be the knowledge and rhetoric of the speaker, and the more important his biography and social position.

In synthesis, on preparing the communication of a given value, the starting point ought to be: first adequately defining the situation of enunciation, second, getting it right in preparing and expressing the public discourse and third, relying on the legitimacy of the speaker.

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[7] Promoted by Jack Valero and Austen Ivereigh, on the occasion of the visit of Pope Benedict to the U.K. in 2010. See www.catholicvoices.org.uk. See also Valero & Ivereigh, *Who Know Where They Stand": Catholic Voices and the Papal Visit to the UK.*

5. The framework of values as the main message

As already said, to communicate the symphony of truth in the new social scenario one needs to concentrate one's efforts towards assuring the expression of the general framework of values. Questions about the framework are not obvious or secondary, but fundamental. Without the ample framework of the Christian ethos, the music may be perceived as ideological partiality, sectorial isolation or fallacy.

The framework is the bridge that connects with today's culture; it is the raw material to intertwine a new shared "cultural fabric": charity towards all and before all, especially towards those in difficult circumstances. This is the condition of credibility so that what is offered about values "in tension" can be perceived as service. The principle of gradualness in social processes is thus respected.

Many of the great gestures of Pope Francis, for instance, serve to reconstruct the common frame, offering to pass from the *field hospital* to the *community hospital*, for in the community there are already shared links, personal relations on which to lay the dialogue about the

controversial topics without risk of misunderstanding: the common background music allows paying attention to some fragments or instruments, because they are heard within the harmony of the whole.

After expressing one's frame, one can converse about other values and proposals. Having secured the bridge, it is possible to cross the river. That's why constructing the bridge comes first. The bridge is also constructed by working on topics linked with values "in tune" with present-day society. Also, when certain values "in tension" are placed in another frame, they may change status and become part of the common frame, as when the Pope asks to struggle for the rights of children soldiers, of those who spend their day in the streets or are victims of the slave trade, or of those still in the womb of their mothers.

Two more considerations are in order. This "symphonic truth" is a sustainable public position, a discursive "meta-frame", which makes it possible to share in the conversation by contributing one's values while constructing a society for all. Hence, the more negatively a context is judged, whether social, ideological or time-wise, the more important it is to communicate the "framework of values" and "values in tune", so as to make it possible to tackle the "values in tension" informed in charity and in the dialogic spirit of the symphony. In a simple formula, we could say that a positive coefficient of communication of Christian identity is akin to communicating the shared framework on the context, speech and action of values "in tune" minus the speech and action of "values in tension".

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY = <u>Framework of Values</u>
Context, (discourse, values shared – discourse, values in tension

Finally, the "symphony of truth" is better interpreted if the orchestra has an abundance of players and instruments: even though the soloist may be great, his being alone restricts the possibilities of melodic expression. A natural conclusion is to constructe choirs of voices, networks of participation and expression. The wealth of the Christian message is expressed in a diversity of nuances, countenances, history, spiritualities, and perspectives: bringing in others and joining others, working in teams, widening the frame of expression.

To communicate is a human act, which engenders a community. An open, dialoguing, respectful and sincere communication builds up open, dialoguing, respectful and sincere communities. An aggressive, close and distant communication builds up a close and distant community. A communication imbued with charity founds a more Christian community.

SIX KEYS TO COMMUNICATE VALUES

1. **Constructing a common framework:** by action, communication, projects and relations, make explicit and communicate the institutional key ideas (vision and mission) effectively transforming it into a culture of the organization, to make it influence initiatives, daily practice, criteria for decisions and reference paradigms.

2. **Promote dialogue and open relations:** dialogue guarantees coexistence in a plural society. It is a situation of communication based on agreeing about mutual respect. Thus

respect (primacy of charity, authenticity, solidarity) becomes the music of the organization, not on paper but in daily reality.

3. **Propose one's convictions starting from common values:** to base communication on what is shared implies making an effort to delve into one's identity so as to discover the right words; it begins by listening carefully, and goes together with the clarity and relevance of the message.

4. **Let others join, join others:** open and wide relations develop by sharing projects and hopes, favouring bonds of solidarity and a communal proactive role.

5. **Collaborate in solving the social problems of one's environment:** the identity of an educational institution of Christian inspiration shows in the attention to the milieu and its contribution to issues that demand collective action, such as the eradication of poverty, the promotion of work for the youth, the struggle against forms of violence among adolescents such as bullying, avoiding a narrow and self-referencing agenda.

6. **Empower one's enunciating legitimacy:** one's personal biography and social position give legitimacy to a public voice. Coherence between communication and action, as well as the ability to empathize, are determining elements in legitimating bearers of values. Every public has its scale of values and we can understand why the anti-abortion declarations of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, George W.Bush, Justin Bieber or Jack Nicholson were received differently, despite the fact that the speakers used similar words.

CHALLENGES FOR UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS IN A CULTURALLY FRAGMENTED ENVIRONMENT

Ana Marta Gonzalez, University of Navarre

Some months ago an interdisciplinary group was set up at the University of Navarre to reflect on how to develop a method specific to the University for dealing with controversial questions within and without the academic community.

1. A topic worth studying

Let us begin with the consideration that the global predominant culture that surrounds us whether we like it or not, is not always receptive of certain points of view, acceptable as they may be in other milieus.

We also warn that the lack of correct answers when raising questions adapted to this new global milieu can condition the authority and prestige of a university, precisely because, owing to its commitment to the universality of science, the university is supposedly competent to carry out such tasks.

This same thing suggests that a university intent on properly tackling conflictive topics cannot rely exclusively on strategies imported from elsewhere, necessary as these may prove

to be in certain moments. To assess what the university can and ought to do, we have to keep in mind the nature and purpose of this institution, the place it occupies in society, and therefore what society has the right to expect of it.

Now, the purpose of the university as an institution is to guarantee the right conditions for generating and reproducing knowledge. With it, it satisfies the human desire to know, something valuable in itself but which also enriches social life, to the extent that it significantly contributes to an increase in culture and to improved living conditions.

To clarify the ends of the university as an institution allows us to understand why ordinarily the university stays out of the political debate, except in clear cases that threaten the free exercise of knowledge, and to that extent its own institutional survival. Since this purpose justifies its existence, this same purpose justifies its institutional interventions in society. It is not that its members should be alien or indifferent to other problems or crises that affect society: it is only that the university, as such, is not ordinarily entitled to speak with one institutional voice in such matters, unless the academic community overwhelmingly backs up this unity, or society demands an answer.

It is certainly to be expected that a self-styled Catholic university should never take positions that contradict the Catholic faith, and that should always back those that promote Christian values. Nevertheless, the university as such does not consider it its duty to intervene institutionally every time some aspect of Catholic dogma is questioned. If not, it would not do its job, the more so in a globalized world where every day we are informed of innumerable injustices committed.

At the same time, one hopes that the members of any university, Catholic or not, owing to their commitment to truth and freedom characterizing them, subscribe to a minimum set of values and ideas, and hence to some moral commitments that would justify an institutional intervention before certain questions. There are times, in fact, when lack of intervention before questions of grave moral import, so felt by the academic community, could be seen as collaborationism, or at least as a dent in the moral reputation of the university. In this respect, for instance, the German universities of Hitler's time were criticized when anti-Semitic action intensified; and in the final years of the 20th century something similar happened in relation to apartheid in American universities.

All this suggests the need to reflect on the criteria that should inform institutional action in determinate cases, but it also explains why the greater part of public speeches originating from a university are not the direct product of its department of communication, but of members of the academic community, who freely expound their opinions in fora of very different types.

By "public speeches" it is not meant here texts presented in symposia and specialized meetings, judged by peers, but interventions directed at the general public; they are arguments meant to make explicit clearly defined ideas and opinions; they include also information during which more or less controversial opinions may be uttered, in all cases endorsed or authorized by academic credentials.

In this regard, we take for granted that good communication practice ought to be supported by good academic practice, which privileges first of all rigorously acquired knowledge according to the methods proper to each discipline, which separates what is generally accepted from what is merely matter of opinion. Nevertheless this is not enough. As we know, acquiring

knowledge and transmitting it are two different skills, not always present in the same person; there are also people who communicate well in a certain forum and not in another. In the fragmented present-day cultural context a communication that is clear, effective, consistent with the nature of the university, and also socially responsible, requires carefully checking the points of reference which every piece of communication must have. In this we can also recognize the opportunity to grow in an aspect that belongs to the very core of university life.

2. Making a Virtue of Necessity

At times one is forced to make a virtue of necessity. But there are virtues that do not stop developing until necessity exerts pressure. Such virtues, however, have to do with the acquisition and transmission of knowledge in a multi-cultural context, where few things are taken for granted.

Clearly, such context is not ordinarily the most propitious for the advancement of knowledge. To the extent in which science progresses on the achievements of previous generations, science presupposes tradition; those familiar with this tradition understand more things in less time, hence are able to advance more rapidly. What is true for every scientific discipline is also true for culture in general: those who share a given cultural tradition can understand more without need for detailed explanations; those who do not, or share only a few aspects of it, must advance more slowly.

Now, men and women of contemporary westernized societies, deeply individualized, live in a world culturally fragmented, and tend to get surprised at proposals that give more importance to common values than to individual freedom of thought and of action: in this sense at least we are all liberal. To exercise reason in such a fragmented culture means first of all accepting this situation as a starting point, and taking as one's own the task of interpreting what I have in common with my interlocutor, so as to start creating some form of community. In this respect, society has the right to expect that, precisely for dedicating ourselves to cultivating knowledge, we members of the university community are in a better position than others to understand the surrounding world, and to discover links where others see only reason for conflict. The university, or at least its lecturers, should acknowledge its most specific social responsibility precisely in that.

In fact, to the extent in which they speak from a university, i.e. consider first their commitment to study, and stay away from the immediate public debate, those who intervene in public life as professors can afford to contribute a more objective and distant vision of things. Clearly we professors are not always up to what society in justice expects of us. In fact, behind apparently objective texts, a discerning reader can detect rivalries between schools, a political commitment, an ideological sympathy. All of us are human. Nevertheless professional ethics, which in such cases requires intellectual honesty, entails subordinating every illegitimate motivation to the intrinsic demands of reason. The integrity of the professors is the cornerstone of the entire university edifice. This integrity is compatible with error, with more or less unfortunate opinions, but in no way with dishonesty, the distortion of argument, or of fact, however praiseworthy the declared end may appear.

It is precisely here where academic work and activism part company. The activist hurries on; he wants to give quick solutions to difficult problems. The professor takes his time; aware of the complexity of things and of the limitations of his approach, he wants to analyze the available

facts and arguments; in order to form a honest and impartial judgment, hence open to diversity of opinions and criticism, he carefully considers his own, without expecting metaphysical certainties about contingent questions that do not exceed probability, or pass as scientific what has not qualified as such.

It is unquestionable, nevertheless, that precisely this task demands stretching to the maximum one's intellectual and moral capacities, the more so in our context. On being informed about numberous injustices committed, we are in a position to understand not only activist impatience, but also their revolutionary wrath. In such context, the risk of confusing academic work with social and political activism is around the corner. Hence it is urgent recalling that the task of the university and its pace of work is different. To the extent in which it is truly a community of study and reflection, the university must have leisure and take its time. It does not mean not to intervene in cultural and social debates, but it must act in its own way. But for that we need a special conviction and strength. Neither scientific competence nor good will is enough by itself; both are necessary. In the last analysis, what is necessary is that classical wisdom, theoretical and practical, should imbue all levels of university life and its government.

3. The Ideal of Wisdom

The term "wisdom" has fallen into disuse, perhaps for being unconsciously associated with mystical elderly Orientals; today's word is "experts", a category that for Aristotle represented the lowest stage of knowledge, in that the expert understood facts, but not their causes. Wisdom, on the other hand entails, like science, knowing causes. Aristotle describes wisdom as "science of first principles and causes." As such it cannot be improvised; it presupposes hard, scientific work. Nevertheless it goes beyond that; the scientist who reflects on the truth he has attained, and acknowledges its limitations, has taken an important step towards wisdom; precisely because of that, he is in a position to find his and other's bearings in his research, thus opening new fields of knowledge.

Looking carefully we realize that to attain wisdom is in reality the end that we seek in cultivating any science. This end can in no way be identified with a more immediate "product" or "result" of a line of research, or with any of the partial ends sought during the research. Although such ends are necessary, to confuse the end of the research with them would be to underestimate the element of surprise that goes with all research, thus caving in to pragmatism, which corrupts true research and in the medium run always disappoints.

What we seek in doing science must take these ends into account, but cannot be identified with them; it does not appear as a topic of investigation in our work, not even when in the midst of a line of research we hit on some perspective, a light that permits a new, improved understanding when not its ultimate explanation. That is where, discreetly, wisdom appears. In this sense he is wise who knows how to make his scientific work relative, for he is aware of the relatively modest place such work occupies in the vast field of knowledge. Ordinarily it is then that he makes his own a truth not empirically verifiable. At the same moment he sees the ethical component intrinsic to the practice of knowledge, which entails accepting this truth revealing itself to the intellect as a good given to it; hence accompanied by some strong emotion.

This type of intellectual movement, generally invisible, is what grants credibility to the dialogue proper to the university among colleagues, professors and students; what makes of the wise person more than a vain erudite, changing him into a person able and willing to direct

others; a *master*, provided we don't fall into the error of calling such only a few geniuses. In any case, it is this type of wisdom, and not simple erudition that can leave an unforgettable mark on those who pass through the university, giving them lifelong habits of good judgement, which cannot be acquired anywhere else, least of all in the culture of the media.

Perhaps, its having fallen into disuse is the clearest sign that the ideal of wisdom is worth rescuing. In a somewhat alarmist vein, *Gaudium et Spes* proclaimed several decades ago: "For the future of the world stands in peril unless wiser men are forthcoming." (n.15) What does this mean?

First of all, that there are no simple technical solutions to human issues. Communication challenges that imply personal and social fragmentation and cultural diversitiy are largely human challenges, and as such no solution is available by investing more in computer sciences or hiring consultants. Human problems, furthermore, cannot be tackled with the tools of a single science. What is expected of a university institution is that it should undertake a long journey, the only one worthwhile, consisting first of all in leading the long and demanding, rigorous search for knowledge, up to its highest form: wisdom.

This is what in the last analysis internally strengthens an academic institution: the determination to cultivate reason to its ultimate consequences; the fearless opening to all the aspects of truth, and hence dialogue with all those able to contribute something in this direction. This too, can permit us to understand why Christianity is particularly in tune with the endeavours of the university. I think this is what St Josemaría had in mind when he wrote:

> Since you want to acquire a Catholic or universal mentality, here are some characteristics you should aim at:
> —a breadth of vision and a vigorous endeavour to study more deeply the things that are permanently alive and unchanged in Catholic orthodoxy;
> —a proper and healthy desire, which should never be frivolous, to present anew the standard teachings of traditional thought in philosophy and the interpretation of history…;
> —a careful attention to trends in science and contemporary thought;
> —and a positive and open attitude towards the current changes in society and in ways of living. (Furrow 428)

I would underline that there is nothing particularly Catholic in these recommendations, except the very energy entailed in the search for truth. If anything, what attracts attention in this passage is the open attitude before social and cultural changes. This attitude is not the result of naivety or of lack of knowledge of evil and error, which distort the various ways of coexistence. The look of the author, nevertheless, does not linger in making an accurate diagnosis of these evils, but rather tries to catch whatever positive content a social change may have. This attitude attracts attention for being in contrast with a widespread viewpoint that considers the Catholic Church as the enemy of reason and of progress.

Even though this view can unfortunately claim many historical eventsas proof, it is certain that the task of reason is not only the call of every university, but also, and *a fortiori*, of every university openly declaring its Christian inspiration. A university that centers its endeavours on the Incarnation of the Logos has more than enough motives to trust reason, and promote, personally and institutionally, a fruitful dialogue between faith and reason. It can show with deeds the benefits that either of the two, plus culture in general, can get from this interchange.

To do so it is indispensable for the university to cultivate theology to a scientific level comparable to that of other fields of knowledge. Among other things, the positive cultivation of theology is a means to appreciate the real possibilities of reason for tackling certain questions, and to this extent be a stimulus for its development.

In fact, the harmony between reason and faith, which every Christian supports for theological reasons, is not always evident; this specific task demands a sustained intellectual effort in constant need of proper epistemological distinctions. It is therefore indispensable that, without abandoning the effort at understanding the times, reason should deeply delve into many spheres of knowledge, taking up serious challenges from every academic discipline while also accepting challenges specific to the interdisciplinary approach.

Only the university provides an adequate milieu to carry out this work, running the gauntlet of presentism[8] and of cultural small mindedness. It does so to the extent in which it facilitates the study and academic dialogue with colleagues in principle united by no more than the interest to offer more satisfactory answers to common problems of science and of social coexistence. At the end of the day, to the extent in which reason demands universality, it would be risky to accept as rationally convincing what no more than you and your small circle considers so. This is not the same as to raise consensus to the status of criterion of truth; it simply means that in certain issues the lack of consensus ought to be taken as an invitation to continue investigating, even if only the reasons for dissent. It is the most logical consequence of endorsing the aforementioned harmony between reason and faith.

4. Working Under Suspicion

To affirm all this does not mean ignoring that in many cases proposals from universities of declared Christian identity face at once the suspicion of sectarianism. It does mean accepting that the only way to deactivate this suspicion is to discover in the academic work itself, a source of solidarity, showing with deeds that we share the same world, the same interest for science, the same concerns. Also in this task theology, or the scientific reflection on the faith, is not a hindrance, but a stimulus for the development of science and a contribution to social coexistence. It is necessary to show with deeds that the Christian patrimony is wealth that can be shared by anyone, even by those who do not share in the integrity of the faith. This is the clearest service that an institution inspired by Christian principles is in a position to offer to a society wounded by deep divisions.

Somehow, in the present cultural situation we should acknowledge a historical opportunity to rectify past performances marked by intolerance. Let us not forget that in certain milieus there still persists the suspicion that if Christians were in power, they would feel once again the temptation of imposing their faith on the rest, out of the conviction of its universal validity. It is not easy to refute this fear, because the temptation to impose one's ideas by force is not peculiar to Christians, no matter how many motives they would have not to fall into it. Nevertheless history shows that all men, whichever their creed, more or less consciously experience the impulse to assert their opinions or ideals, the more so when they consider them just or true.

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[8] Attitude of those who think that only the present matters.

Precisely because of this, to regulate life in common with those who think differently, there exist different political regimes. None of them is perfect, or guarantees by itself a peaceful and just coexistence. The Europe that survived the wars of religion proposed a formula of coexistence up to now taken for granted: the preferred regime is the one that assures the greater display and coexistence of individual freedoms. Kant defined the rule of law as coexistence of freedoms. Taking the law as the ambit that limits mutual coercion, he added that political coexistence must be receptive to the exchange of ideas, even those that inconvenience political power or are not in keeping with the dominant opinion.

Nevertheless, for some years now it has become evident that the modern solution for the living together of people with different ideas have come across two types of objections. On the one hand, the respect of individual freedoms that shape Kant's definition of the rule of law and that we assume as something natural, clashes with some forms of community life where some individual rights appear restricted. Think for instance of women in Islam. Despite their accepting this form of life, we think that it is a disgraceful situation, an interiorized submission fruit of insufficient enlightenment. In line with the universal declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen, we Christians of today tend to think that accepting close communities just like that, governed by their own laws, within liberal societies, is akin to going backwards to the Middle Ages.

On the other hand, the same Christians can consider that in practice, defending the possibility of such communities can be the only way of defending their own identity in respect of some juridical developments that have presented as individual rights lifestyles expressly clashing with what Christians consider just not only in respect to specifically Christian doctrine, but also to issues of natural law. If not, how to avoid the contradiction into which the university of Notre Dame has fallen? In accepting the legislation in force, which legitimizes same-sex marriages, it has extended family benefits to such employees.

It therefore happens that, although universal in principle, Christians can *de facto* defend positions which, in respect of the dominant liberal universalism turn out to be particular. Such positions threaten placing them politically in a situation analogous to that of Jewish or Moorish quarters in the Middle Ages. The debate in the 1980s that saw liberals and communitarians square it off, reset the problem. In simple terms, liberals represented the universal solution; communitarians appeared as relativists, but respectful of cultural diversity.

Today's Christians have good reasons to acknowledge the part of right and wrong of each posture, without identifying with any. This puts them, whether they like it or not, in a position of mediators. Their vocation as mediators stands out in the other great topic of our time, which demands revising the usual arguments with which we uncover the relationship ethicsreligion, theoretical as well as practical.

Keep in mind, in fact, that some of the most virulent conflicts and atrocities that make many people shudder are practiced by individuals or groups considering themselves religious. It matters not that, in many cases, religion has become an excuse to channel bitterness and frustrations of many kinds. It is certain that, with or without reason, religion, instead of appearing as an ethical and civilizing principle, appears in wide sectors of public opinion as a dangerous reality for human civilized coexistence; a principle of fanaticism and more or less constrained violence; a focus of intolerance, before which the only defense would be confining religious creeds to the private sphere, excluding them altogether from public life. It is not mere

chance, I think that the title of the first encyclical of Benedict XVI was *Deus Caritas Est*: one of the best known risks of our modern times is that the name of God be associated with violence, intolerance and fanaticism, instead of love.

Well then, in this context the absolute priority is to rescue the name of God for evangelization to be convincing. This is the exhortation by the last two pontiffs: not to confuse Christianity with morals: the reason is that for many, Christians or not, speaking of the Church is to speak of moral prohibitions, but this view makes it immensely difficult to accept the genuine message of Christ, and distorts the priorities regulating the announcement.

It is clear that it is not a question of silencing essential aspects of Christian morals, which are just aspects of natural morals. It is only a question of having the complete framework before our eyes, around which the decisive questions of our times are decided, to discern, in each case, what our priorities should be, and where effort should be exerted. It is not a question of acquiescing in a comfort zone aimed at finding peace at all costs; it is necessary, nevertheless, to distinguish between actions that build up justice and those that cause resentment and close the door to dialogue and coexistence. At this propos I usually remind people that St Thomas Aquinas mentioned, as a good to aspire to as rational beings, "not to offend those with whom we have to converse". This is not opposed to telling the truth, but forces one to think on how to do it.

THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION, IDENTITY AND PERCEPTIONS

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I had prepared a session, but have decided to change it to be on line with the general trend of these sessions I summarize my intervention in six key words.

1. Wisdom

In the previous session Ana Marta Gonzalez presented us with some very relevant topics: the university has to find its own voice so as to take part in debates on questions of fundamental ethics and anthropology. She has indicated how to share truth in a fragmented society by exercising wisdom. This is our first word.

And the university has to do it as what it is. Its position is privileged: from the university it is possible to influence social trends, beginning with knowledge and research.

A work group (called "frame-group") has been set up in the university. Its aim is to help researchers not only to circulate information, but before that to carry out research adequately. It is a question of finding a new approach to our research, so that after divulging the results these may spread farther. Put another way, we have to ask right questions correctly, so as to let answers emerge that are understandable for the society in which we live. Understandable answers ought to be given to reasonable questions.

2. Legitimacy

The second word is legitimacy. From the social point of view, as presented to us in the previous session, religion today has problems of legitimacy. Some believers of other religions exert violence as a form of defense of their faith. We have recent, abundant examples. In the collective mindset, such aggressive methods are detrimental to the believers of all religions, who are unjustly affected by the behavior of a few. We Catholics too, suffer this stereotype. At times we are denied "permission to act" as if we tried to impose our worldview, or we were motivated by some vested interest.

My proposal is that we should not limit ourselves to how to continue participating in debates, but to how to recover legitimacy and credibility, which is a different issue. We ought to act differently. Benedict XVI did it with all his strength, proclaiming that the name of God cannot be linked to violence. This is the line: breaking the dominant stereotype and going back associating the name of God to freedom, respect of the dignity of the person and all the positive values at stake.

3. Perceptions

The third word is "perceptions." A person, an institution, a university, is what it thinks of itself, but socially is also what others think of it: families, alumni, the social milieu, the State, the stakeholders.

Such perceptions have a rational component (whether my son has been admitted to the university, whether he has graduated, whether he has found employment); but also it has an emotional one, very difficult to grasp, but no less important (how I felt I was treated).

Each institution engenders positive and negative perceptions. As to the universities, specifically, some stakeholders may consider us as a place where serious work is carried out, deserving trust, out of the quality education we impart. But we can also engender negative perceptions: we can be seen as elitist, politically conservative, bereft of social concern. In a number of cases (positive or negative) it is by no means easy to distinguish between which of these perceptions are of the university and which more properly derived from the key values related to its Catholic identity.

Perceptions are very important, in that they have consequences. In our case, for instance, they translate into votes in the town council, or in parliament. Positive or negative perceptions determine many decision and patterns of behavior, such as if a student will join us or not, whether to make a donation, etc. Perceptions also increase or decrease social credibility, i.e. the possibility of being listened to by public opinion.

We begin by considering first the negative perceptions and their relevance. To identify a problem, when it exists, means not to deny it, not to take it personally, not to get angry, not to go on saying it is unjust, or that negative perceptions have no real foundation.

It is important to carry out an honest work of discernment, in all cases avoiding exaggerations. They have to be taken in their just measure, equitably: what are the negative features we are charged with? Limit the analysis to three or four fundamental ones. We ought to listen to people that talk respectfully but tell the truth without fear of saying disagreeable things. That is why the management has always been warned to eschew flatterers and the faint-hearted.

With this negative portrait it is possible to draft an agenda: sketch the positive frame of reference, aspects where I have to improve so that unacknowledged qualities now emerge. It is not make up or hide anything. We ought to change those things in which we think negative criticism is right: aspects that will help the image of the university better reflect its deep identity.

4. Change

We can say, "What they say is not true" and carry on; but I think that if we want others to change, we have to change first, by seeing the part of truth in their critical perceptions.

Even when negative perceptions have been acknowledged, some still think that the situation will improve when public opinion changes. They pass the buck. It never works, either in government or in communication or in life.

Once it is clear to me how I like to be perceived, I have to change first. If they do not understand, I am blameworthy, and I have to try again. One ought always to acknowledge that the one who criticizes is at least partially right, so as to be able to say that he is also partially wrong.

Incidentally, vulnerability, in any institution, including the universities here represented, is a great value. Humility is a great value: sensitivity, capacity to listen, to acknowledge that I have to do things differently, at least partially. That is to say, change is not weakness, but the opposite. The word change, properly understood, expresses a host of positive qualities, and engenders a host of positive perceptions.

At times there is resistance to change, lack of self-criticism. Experience shows, however, that in reality the critical look of others helps us not to deviate from our true identity.

To promote one's change, when necessary, triggers off other people's change, even in their perceptions. Others can change if they see me change; this facilitates changing opinions without giving up using their intelligence.

To introduce necessary change is to give others the opportunity to change too. That's why at times it is a good thing to stage the process described: self-criticism, resolutions, change.

This can be done, for instance, through projects that bring out the social concern of the university, the political pluralism of its personnel, social integration, etc. These issues are in the DNA, the identity of the universities today here. But can we say that people perceive it as a defining element of the culture of this university? It is the first step: from identity to corporate culture. It will therefore be perceived as such and a proper image be formed, thus improving legitimacy.

The change ought to be announced, prepared with time, and given a definite moment in which to appear publicly. But afterwards it must be deployed during a certain time with a series of actions consistent with the promise. For this, the cooperation of all the members of the organization is necessary, especially of those with positions of responsibility, the decision makers. One must transmit new ideas, make them understood, do some fine-tuning, motivate, show the advantages. All of this needs explanations, ideas, data, and arguments.

The process of change in perceptions cannot be sudden. It is produced at a slow fire, little by little, without hurry. It has to be carried out from the heart, and shared among all.

5. Relations

These days we have frequently used the term "public conversation". I think it worth also to speak of relations. The best way of changing is in fact to establish relations with many people, the more varied the better.

An American sociologist says that the Church, all along history, has kept its evangelizing capacity only when establishing relations with foreigners, barbarians, pagans and atheists. And it lost it when it locked itself in its ghetto and left evangelization to the laws.

In the universities we ought to maintain relations with all: with government, with the opposition, with rightists and leftists, with Catholics and secularists. Some will be invited to give lectures, other will not, but we have to live with all, looking for the right forums and meetings. In such relations we ought to look for what unites, for the common good of the territory that we share, not just our corporate aims.

6. Charity

We began speaking of wisdom. We can say that wisdom is a virtue of the intelect. The last of the six words I have chosen is charity, which is a virtue of relations. All our colleagues, directors of communication in any university, need to keep relations; we, and generally speaking every professional who intends to make of his work a meeting point with God, ought to sanctify such relations, first with justice and then with charity.

The aforementioned American sociologist said something else of interest, which I like to recall here. He asked the reason for the initial expansion of Christianity. It has been said that it came to fill the vacuum left by the fall of the Roman Empire. But he denies that. In the hard, cruel world that characterized the Empire, Catholics formed communities where one could

experience freedom and charity: they were austere, tried to live a clean life, took care of the elderly, of widows, etc. That is why what we have been told is relevant: building up the contents of communication from charity. Even we may need to re-build the contents of an activity from the starting point of charity.

7. Conclusion

What has been said allows us to conclude. Ana Marta Gonzalez, as well as other thinkers, have reminded us that religion and the Church have suffered regarding their legitimacy, owing mostly to the attacks of others, but also –albeit partly- to other Christians: basically for not being on the side of freedom but of power; for neglecting the poor, for being obsessed with money, etc.

Many have attempted answers for a long time. Some from outside the world, so to speak. Others have attempted it by other means, with some nostalgia for past times, because at that time it was enough to form a lobby to obtain good laws by convincing the political, cultural and media representatives. Today it is no longer so, for to change the laws it is necessary to obtain social backing. The change we are undergoing is not technological but cultural.

I ask whether we are not facing a historical opportunity. A common characteristic of the universities represented here is love for the world and for the Church. We have these two loves, and we can help recover that legitimacy both from freedom and from solidarity. I would re-word what inspires these educational centres from "bring Christ to all environments" to "bring charity to all relations": family, professional, international. It is something that he who loves the Church, but is outside the world, finds more difficult. We have to add salt and light, charity and wisdom in all relations. I think that this too is a formidable way of recovering the legitimacy so much mentioned in all the previous sessions.