

# **THE ECONOMY OF COMMUNION IN FREEDOM PROJECT: A Resource for Catholic Business Education**

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The Economy of Communion in Freedom (EoC) project, begun in 1991, represents an alternative economic and business model founded on a vision of interpersonal and social relationships in harmony with the social doctrine of the Catholic Church. With over 750 businesses worldwide and more than one hundred masters' theses and doctoral dissertations on the subject, the project also provides many opportunities for mission-driven curriculum development. This paper will describe the background and principles of the EoC project, the development of a business elective course, and the EoC International Youth Internship Program. It will conclude with a review of principles for educating future Catholic business leaders and will examine the EoC project in light of those principles.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The EoC project began when Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement (the "Movement"), urged its members in Brazil to form businesses that would help to relieve the abject poverty that she witnessed there. It was her intent that the spirit and way of life of the early Christians would be manifested in businesses that would be either formed or rededicated according to a new set of priorities. Their "culture of giving" would be opposed to the "culture of having" that is predominant in today's world; and their profits, to be divided into three parts, would be freely placed in common. The first part would go to people in need, helping them with such basic necessities as food, clothing, medicine, and jobs. This would not be simply a charitable endeavor, but a true communion of the many stakeholders of the business, which would place the human person at its center. The second part of the profits would be reinvested in the business to provide for sustainability and continued growth. Support for educational programs intended to form new men and women in a culture of giving would be provided by the third part of the profits. These practices would be a manifestation of love-agape, not only in the distribution of profit, but more importantly in the relationships of love that would undergird the businesses. Thus, communion—"an encounter of gratuity, the result of the love-agape lived by two or more in reciprocity" (Bruni 2002)—would be the distinguishing characteristic of this business model. The economic and relational life of the business would be based on Gospel principles freely adopted by entrepreneurs.

At the time that the pilot project was announced by Lubich (1991a), members of the Movement were already practicing a communion of goods to the extent that each freely chose to do so, and to the extent that their various states of life permitted. This practice had begun during the early days of the Movement, when Lubich and her young followers sought to love each "neighbor" in war-stricken Trent, Italy, by immediately sharing anything that they had with those around them (Lubich 1997). They took the words of scripture, "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 19:19),

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“whatever you did to one of the least of these, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40), and “ask, and it will be given to you” (Mt 7:7, Lk 11:9) literally. Not only did they give what they had, but they asked God for anything needed by a neighbor that they, themselves, could not provide and they experienced his providence (Lubich 1997, 5-6).

The idea of putting wealth in common is not a new one. Araujo (1991, 14) reviews the history of this concept as found in the writings of Aristotle, Plato and Pythagoras, where sharing was based on friendship; and in the Jewish traditions of the Qumran community, where it was mandatory. She distinguishes the communion of goods of the early Christians as a sharing that “surges forth freely as a result of their new way of life and unity of purpose. . . (15)” Servant of God Iginio Giordani, co-founder of the Movement (1977, 254), examined the writings of Ignatius, noting that “[t]he sharing of property was one phase of the intense community life of the Church carried out in the knowledge that [the only good was that] which was done in the spirit of unity.”

Sociologist Vera Araujo describes the general decline in these practices over the centuries and its rediscovery in the 1940s by members of the Movement: “It is lived by those who have understood the spirituality of unity which is based on living the Gospel with a universal view of humanity” (1991, 16). The members of the Movement live the spirituality of unity, with the desire to bring about the objective of Jesus’ prayer before he died: “Father. . . may they all be one” (Jn 17:11, 21). A unique aspect of this Catholic lay movement is that it includes not only members from other Christian religions, but also Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, and others who have no particular religious conviction, but who are persons of good will. All of these members of the Movement retain their own convictions, but share a desire for unity and dialogue (Gold 1996). Because of the diversity of their nationalities, faith convictions, and cultures, the communion of goods practiced by the members of the Movement is uniquely different from earlier practices of putting goods in common.

The EoC project carries this initiative a step further, into the realm of the marketplace. Thus, the EoC more closely resembles the “classical Latin tradition” that viewed economic activity as an exercise of “reciprocal assistance and friendship” (Bruni & Uelmen 2006), than it does the self-interest of the modern marketplace. Lubich (1991b, 9) cites *Rerum Novarum* (Pope Leo XIII 1891) and *Centesimus Annus* (Pope John Paul II 1991) as inspirations for extending the Church’s teachings about social justice into the realm of the EoC businesses. She also refers to *Popularum Progressio* (Pope Paul VI 1967) as a “clarion call, the voice of Christ in the twentieth century, encouraging those . . . already devoted to improving conditions in developing countries and inviting the world to do more, much more.” (Lubich 2007b) In these encyclicals, central to the Catholic Church’s social doctrine, one finds a focus on the “development in solidarity of humanity dignity” (Pope Paul VI 1967), the role of work and of the worker (Pope Leo XIII 1891; Pope John Paul II 1981) and the vision of a business enterprise as a community of solidarity—a “society of persons”, not just of capital, which must contribute to the common good (Pope John Paul II, 1991).

It is from these convictions that the EoC was announced, with its emphasis on the right to private property as a fundamental human right but, also, as a means to acquire goods so that they might be used “to fulfill their universal destiny, to see—always in freedom—that all people and all nations have their share of the world’s goods.” (Araujo 1991, 16) The model is founded on the

belief that resources “should not . . . be abused and destroyed but rather used for the good of all”, with the caveat that “[a]ll of this has to be done in total freedom” (26). In this context, profit cannot be a business’s sole objective. Rather, a business must be socially useful, and the individual person is not regarded as just a producer or consumer of products.

The EoC has been described as a “charismatic economic experience” and has been likened to those that resulted from the calls heard by St. Benedict, St. Francis of Assisi, Britain’s Robert Owen, and Mahatma Ghandi (Bruni 2008). It might be deemed to fulfill both the promise and the responsibility in the social message of the early church fathers, who described “wealth [as having] a function of its own: it is to serve the good of all men. If it serves only the selfish use of a few, it betrays its function”. (Giordani 1977, 265)

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE EoC**

At the time of its emergence, Sorgi (1991, 12) identified three concepts encompassed in the EoC model. The first is the concept of “association . . . the formation of companies composed of many persons who put their capital in common”. The second distinctive concept is a “spirit of fraternity,” concerning “justice towards one’s employees”. Sorgi describes this as a means for the company to become a community. And, finally, Sorgi describes the distribution of profits, “which would be freely put in common with a view to the poor, not only to help them survive, but to raise them up to the full human dignity which is theirs by right.” These concepts incorporate elements of Christian social doctrine which consider the employees as stakeholders in the business--according them a share in the profits, a voice in the direction of the company, and participation as active shareholders. Sorgi describes these elements as having been forgotten, due to the influence of Marxist ideology, even by unions formed on the basis of Christian social doctrine. Although the observation is rooted in a different historical experience from that of the United States, one might still argue that the corporation’s rise to dominance in the U.S. and global economies has often led to a “pathological pursuit of profit and power” (Bakan 2004) in contravention of the public good. In this context, the EoC model is novel in that it includes a sharing of profits beyond the corporate entity, so that the profits are “shared not only within the company but also outside of it. . . .between companies and, even more importantly, with those in need” (Sorgi 1991, 12)

The inspiration for EoC businesses is grounded in a broader effort to live what has come to be known as a “culture of giving” (Gold 1996, 15; Gold 2004, 75). Lubich’s proposal was made against the backdrop of efforts of the Brazilian members of the Movement to meet the needs of the materially poor in their own communities. The resulting EoC businesses found a model for their distinctive culture within the “little cities” of the Focolare Movement. In 1991, the Movement was present in some 156 nations (Zambonini 1991, 8) and included several “little cities” where members and visitors could experience a distinctively Christian way of life. The first of these little cities was Loppiano, near Florence, Italy, with others in such varied locations as the Cameroon, Germany, the United States, Argentina, and Brazil. Each of these little cities had (and still has today) unique characteristics, depending upon the environment in which it is situated. For example, Ottmaring near Augsburg, Germany, is distinguished by ecumenical dialogue, with residents being Catholics and Lutherans; and the little city in the Philippines is characterized as a center for dialogue with the Asian religions (Gallagher 1997, 157). Despite this diversity, the little cities share a common way of life based on the spirituality of unity—“a

specific culture has been identified in these towns, which goes beyond boundaries of race or even religion itself and freely unites people through the values of trust, honesty, generosity and sincerity. This culture. . . has come to be known as a ‘culture of giving’” (Gold 1996, 15). The little cities, however, are not utopian communities shut off from the outside world. Gold (2004, 59) describes the little city of Loppiano, Italy, as having approximately 750 inhabitants and welcoming an average of 40,000 visitors each year. The little cities also have a “regular turnover” in the inhabitants, as they are focal points for the Movement at large; and the businesses in the model towns are part of the local economies and the global market (59). Thus, the “businesses compete freely with those outside the towns on equal terms and so have to be as profitable as any other business” (Gold 1996, 15).

It was while visiting the little city of Araceli, that Lubich proposed her idea of the EoC to 200,000 members of the Movement in Brazil. Her proposal had more to do with her concern that the communion of goods was not sufficient to help the poor whose “favelas”, or slums, existed alongside glittering office towers, than it did with formulating a new model of economics or of corporate governance (Lubich 1996, Bruni 2002). It served as an impetus for members of the Movement to move beyond the personal practices of the communion of goods and the practices of the small businesses in the little city of Araceli. Within two weeks of its announcement, there were approximately 100 businesses involved in the EoC pilot project, with additional inquiries from members of the Movement world-wide who also wanted to participate (Gold 1996). Unlike charitable foundations or other not-for-profit entities, the EoC businesses would carry their founding spirituality into the market economy (Bruni 2002). The businesses, like those already in existence in the little cities, would be formed and/or operated with the expectation that they be profitable, making use of available resources and talent, beginning small, with no illusion of having an immediate impact on economic systems (Recepcion 1998, 130). The two principles that would govern these businesses would be “freedom in the management of the firm and the sharing of resources in complete freedom” (113).

Within a few short years, a number of positive socio-economic aspects of these businesses were identified:

- the business is considered as a community of people where the diversity of function and role do not alter the fundamental equality among all. . .
- the dignity of the workers is rediscovered because everybody actively participates in the life of the business and in the decisions [made]. . .
- the relationships with trade unions are carried out from a viewpoint of collaboration. . .[rather than] conflict. . .
- contacts outside the business also change: customers become neighbors to love and serve. . .competition is rendered ‘less aggressive’-- there is dialogue. . .
- each business makes an effort to be open to its surroundings, giving an active contribution towards civil life, respecting the environment, which is considered a common good. . .

- each business tries to make its contribution towards building a world that is more united (Araujo 1996, 2)

The EoC business guidelines (see Appendix) have continued to evolve, promoting communion and reciprocity among the various stakeholders—management, employees, customers, competitors, and the broader community. The shared experiences of EoC businesses (Ganzon 2008, Ruggiu 2008) provide anecdotal evidence that their practices go beyond corporate social responsibility. The principle of “gratuitousness” (Bruni & Uelmen 2006) is critical to these businesses. Bruni & Uelmen (2006) describe this “self-giving” as providing a vision to the businesses that values relationship and seeks the happiness of others. Gui (2004) examined the EoC model from the perspective of three ethical dimensions (unknown third parties, specified others, and self), finding that justice, solicitude for others, “relational goods”, trust, happiness, and the demand for meaning in one’s life are all dimensions of a “good life”, and are impacted by the daily efforts of those who seek to carry out the EoC principles. Ferrucci (1998a, 27) describes “a capital of relationships” within and among the EoC businesses, “which cannot be measured in dollars and cents.” It is a capital based on reciprocity, where needs and resources are shared freely (Araujo 1997, 7). By 2007, there were almost 800 businesses worldwide that followed the EoC guidelines.

## **THE EoC PROJECT AND BUSINESS EDUCATION**

In their Background Paper, Naughton, et al (2007) call for a “profound integration [by Catholic business schools (“CBS”)] of cultural and economic responsibilities.” They voice concern that CBS have missed an opportunity to “develop faith and Catholic social thought in relation to business,” lamenting that many programs lack a Catholic identity and may even contradict the Church’s teaching. The EoC project, founded on the social teachings of the Catholic Church, offers a response to these concerns. Gold (2003) analyzes the Movement’s economic vision in the context of Weber’s (1958) economic ethic of religion and Novak’s (1993) Catholic ethic, concluding that:

It offers a different vision of a globalised ethic based on market-oriented wealth creation and distribution, governed by principles of solidarity and caring for ones neighbor. Through explicit reference to a communitarian Christian spirituality it manages to break free of the ‘iron cage’ of instrumental economic rationality and offer an example of an alternative economic ethic.

Central to the EoC model is the notion that love can, and should be, an integral part of economic life (Lubich 1996). Speaking at Lubich’s funeral, Cardinal Bertone, Secretary of State of the Vatican (2008), described the EoC project as “giving rise to a new economic theory and praxis based on fraternity, for a sustainable development in favour of all”. He called for its dissemination, praying that “the Lord grant that many scholars and economic experts take on the economy of communion as a viable resource to shape a new shared world order!”

Although Lubich received two honorary doctorates in the field of economics as a result of the EoC project, she has clearly stated that she was not thinking of economic theory when she proposed it (Lubich 1999a, 278). The EoC developed from a charism, not from economic or business theory. Unlike many business or economic models that are founded in theory and must be tested in the “real world”, the inspiration for the EoC project emerged from a lived spirituality, was immediately brought to life in the “real world”, and has since been the subject of

over one hundred masters' theses and doctoral dissertations. There are also a number of other publications, including books (Bruni 2002; Gold 2004); descriptive, case-based, and technical articles (Bruni & Uelmen 2006, Linard 2003, Ruggiu 2008); and a number of resources available online (<http://www.edc-online.org/uk/testi.htm>). This availability of resources makes it possible to develop a course of study in conformity with the Church's social doctrine that is dynamic and appealing to students, while providing them with a sound foundation for understanding the implications of the EoC model for corporate governance and economics. A number of these resources are available at the international EoC web site and at the web site for the North American Association of the EoC (see Appendix for links). In addition, the classroom might be seen as a laboratory, wherein the principles of an EoC business as they relate to collaboration and relationships might be applied.

In a Catholic university setting that supports a mission-driven business program, a study of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church may actually provide the foundational premise for the study of the EoC. In such a setting, the encyclicals (Pope Leo XIII 1891, Pope John Paul II 1981, Pope John Paul II 1991) provide a solid foundation for understanding. For a course of study that may be less intense, but no less rich in substance, the instructor may wish to assign a portion of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (Pontifical, 150-212), and of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (§2401-36; 2443-49). The study of the EoC, however, should not be reserved solely for such programs. In 2006, an intensive two day course was offered for one-hour elective credit at a secular university in Colorado (see Appendix). Students were introduced to the spirit of the EoC and actively engaged in discussion about its impact on the business environment and the dignity of workers, clients, and vendors. The one hour business elective that will be described in this section of the paper was also offered at a non-Catholic university, with no direct references to Catholic teaching and limited discussion of the spirituality of unity from which the EoC project emerged. Nonetheless, their spirit was transmitted and understood through the use of appropriate materials.

The course at Trinity University ("Trinity") had its genesis following collaboration with a faculty member at St. Mary's University ("St. Mary's"), a Catholic university in San Antonio, Texas during 2007. A one hour course in political science on the subject of the EoC was being offered at St. Mary's and two visiting EoC lecturers were available to give a talk at Trinity. An open lecture was planned and publicized to all business students and to other groups on campus, including the vibrant Catholic Students Group. Approximately 75 people attended the lecture, and their written comments indicated a great deal of interest in learning more about the EoC. This feedback provided the impetus for developing a special topic, one-credit hour business course to be offered during spring 2008 on the subject of "EoC: Corporate Social Responsibility and Human Values". The goals of the course were as follows:

- To encourage students to explore the role of business in our society
- To introduce students to the EoC project and its foundational concepts
- To provide students an opportunity to visit with executives of EoC businesses
- To provide students an opportunity to learn more about internships with EoC businesses

- To generate outcomes (course projects) that would promote awareness of the EoC

In designing the course, care was taken to make the requirements reasonable for a one credit hour course, yet provide opportunities for discussion and dialogue. A course presence was established on Blackboard, with a discussion board for students to post their comments. The syllabus included one or more questions to be addressed weekly, with one student designated as the discussion leader (first to post) and each student posting a comment on one question per week. Students were told that there were no “right” or “wrong” answers and that they should make an effort to provide thoughtful reflections. They were to understand that it was appropriate to raise questions and that they need not agree with one another, but that courtesy and respect were of utmost importance. Central to this aspect was the desire to model the “mutual support, respect, and trust” and the “open and honest communications” of an EoC business. As the course progressed, the instructor purposefully refrained from responding or commenting at the discussion board in order to allow students to develop their own threads and responses to one another. One interesting outcome of these inquiries was that class members began to share information about interesting articles that they found on the topics of business, philanthropy, and “social business” (Guth 2008, Lohr 2008, Hamm 2008). Another interesting outcome was that student discussions outside of class resulted in participants being interviewed for an article in the university newspaper.

Reading assignments were chosen from both academic and popular writings and selected videos were used in the classroom. These videos were often used at the end of class, with no opportunity for in-class discussion, in order to (1) make full use of class time, knowing that students would have an opportunity to discuss them via the discussion board, (2) give students some time to “process” what they had viewed without instructor input, and (3) stimulate discussion via the discussion board.

The remainder of this section will address the means by which the five course goals were addressed.

Goal 1: Exploring the Role of Business. Prior to the first class meeting, students were asked to read Friedman’s essay on the social responsibility of business (Friedman 1970) and to post their comments on the discussion board regarding their agreement or disagreement with his premise that the primary role of business is to “make as much money as possible” and that it cannot have “social responsibilities”. Selected video clips from “Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room” were viewed at the end of the first class meeting and students were told that the video had been placed on reserve for optional viewing at the library. Students left the class meeting without any discussion. The viewing of the Enron video seemed to resolve any uncertainty that the students might have had about either corporate social responsibility or use of the discussion board. The postings following this class were focused on what Friedman might have said about Enron, before and after its demise, and on the corporate attitudes that might have influenced Enron’s culture and actions.

Prior to the second class meeting, students were also asked to go online to see what they could find on the subject of corporate social responsibility and to identify one link that provided helpful information. *The Economist* issued a 14-page special report at this time, and students were encouraged to read several of the short articles, even though they had not been included on

the course syllabus (The Economist 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). During the second class, several students were asked to share what they had learned and the class ended with a viewing of “Ethics and Social Responsibility in Business”, a video featuring The Body Shop and Bendigo Bank. Once again, there was no class discussion, but students were asked to post their comments about the motivations for “good” corporate behavior. They were also asked whether there might be a motivating force that would be applicable to all businesses regardless of culture, environment, GDP of the country, industry, size of the business, etc.

Goal 2: Introducing students to the EoC project. Prior to the third week, students were asked to read the EoC business guidelines, which were made available on the Blackboard site. In the classroom, they viewed a video on New Humanity, an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Students were introduced to this grassroots organization that bases its principles and actions on the spirituality of unity with a fast-paced video that places the EoC squarely in the context of the many initiatives in which New Humanity engages, while at the same time illustrating the scope of the EoC. The video clips include the dedication of an EoC business park in Italy and examples of several businesses in different countries. Following the class, students were asked to describe the motivation for behavior of the EoC businesses and were to compare/contrast them with the entities that they had seen depicted in earlier videos. Students were also to comment on the EoC principles—are they universally applicable or do they have limited application?

During subsequent weeks, students developed their understanding of the EoC model through a variety of readings, ranging from a law review essay (Bruni & Uelmen 2006) to descriptive articles and case studies (Bruni & Uelmen 2007, Johnson 2007, Specht 2007, Boesch 2007, Roberge 2007, Bozzani, 2007, Klock 2007). During the fourth and fifth weeks of the course, students worked in groups to discuss and prepare questions that would be addressed to executives from companies that follow EoC principles. They also read an article that analyzed the diffusion of the EoC model from a systems theory approach (Linard 2003). There were several positive student learning outcomes from the use of these divergent readings, as evidenced by their discussion board comments and the questions posed. Topics that were central to their understandings and to the questions posed included:

- development of the EoC from a religious perspective and the integration of this perspective with business life
- distinctions between philanthropy and “communion” in which each person gives and receives in equal dignity
- differences between corporate social responsibility and EoC
- principles that govern EoC businesses (for example, reciprocity vs. hierarchy)
- applications of economic, legal, and system theories to the EoC model
- “real world” experiences of EoC businesses

One issue of importance to students that was approached with a bit of trepidation was the question of whether the EoC model required that one be “religious”. This discussion was begun

in student postings and was one of the questions that would be asked of the EoC experts when they visited during the sixth week of class.

Goal 3: Visiting with Business executives. When students were approved for enrollment in the course (as is required for a special topics course), they were asked to reserve a four-hour block of time for a visit with EoC business representatives. Coordination with the visitors required several planning conference calls, as they would be traveling from Houston, TX and Reston, VA. The guest lecturers would be the same speakers who had inspired student interest the prior year. They represented two different perspectives. One speaker is an entrepreneur who, with his partner, has “power of the purse” and can not only apply the EoC principles in terms of corporate governance, but also share profits. The other speaker is a dynamic CEO who was brought in by venture capitalists to form a successful business, and who has done so by applying EoC principles, but who does not have “power of the purse” to share profits.

The visit brought with it a number of opportunities, including the possibility of further collaboration with St. Mary’s and the possibility of modeling collaborative behavior—the aspect of “communion”. The visit also afforded an opportunity to invite other members of the Trinity community to learn about the EoC project. Thus, the following elements were included (concluding parenthetical comments indicate EoC principles that were addressed by each element):

- Faculty from St. Mary’s and from Trinity (who might, in one sense, be regarded as competitors) gathered for a luncheon with the EoC speakers prior to the class meeting. This was the first opportunity for several members of the administration and the faculty to learn more about the subject and to explore the possibility of further collaboration (development of “relationship capital”).
- Students from the St. Mary’s EoC class (political science) were invited to participate in the Trinity class meeting. Group work was a critical part of the class meeting and care was taken that students were placed in mixed groups so that they would have the opportunity to work together and to learn from one another’s differing perspectives (mutual respect & reciprocity).
- Students had an opportunity to tackle “what if” mini-cases from the purview of traditional business perspectives and from the EoC perspective, with the guidance of the EoC experts. These cases were dilemmas that had actually occurred in EoC businesses and students were told of the actual outcomes following their debriefing (encouragement of creativity and a participative environment).
- The guest lecturers shared their personal experiences of corporate governance, including tough decisions that sometimes had to be made in implementing the EoC guidelines (sharing of expertise for professional growth).
- Students had an opportunity to ask the questions that they had about the EoC (climate that fosters open and honest communications).
- Attendees (approximately 100) were introduced to the EoC project and had an opportunity to ask questions during the last hour, which was open to the

university community. (remaining open to everyone who might want to understand its principles).

Students from both classes and attendees of the open session were encouraged to provide their feedback and to indicate whether they might be interested in learning more about the EoC project, taking a course for credit, or participating in an off-campus experience such as an internship, study abroad, or symposium/meeting. Thirty-four of the attendees in the open session expressed an interest in taking a course on the EoC. At a small, non-Catholic university with a total enrollment just under 2500 (280 business majors), this is a significant degree of interest. Experience from the prior year would suggest that a small number of these students may actually enroll in the course, but that awareness and word of mouth does bring in a number of other interested students. Of the 26 students in this year's class, four had been in attendance at the prior year's lecture.

Goal 4: Introduction to Internships. Trinity students are very interested in internships and other "hands on" opportunities. For example, students in accounting participate in "Big Four" internships during the spring semester of their senior year, and finance students participate in a Student Managed Fund, managing a portfolio that exceeds \$1 million. The director of the EoC International Youth Internship Program was scheduled for a teleconference with the students. Students were also encouraged to read about others' internship experiences (Mundell 2008a). The internship program, itself, will be described in greater detail in a subsequent section of this paper.

Goal 5: Student Projects. For the sixteenth consecutive year, in 2007, Trinity was awarded the No. 1 spot by *U. S. News & World Reports* among institutions in its category (offering a range of undergraduate programs, as well as select masters' programs in the Western United States). Students are highly motivated and a large number of Trinity students complete two majors: one in a liberal arts area, and one in business administration. This leads to a rich dialogue and a wide range of talents within the classroom. In this particular course, offered as a pilot project under the special topics one-time offering rubric, the assigned course number indicated requirements of junior standing and permission to enroll. While some interested students may have been deterred, those inquiring quickly learned that all majors and classifications (first years to seniors) were welcome and that the course would be at an introductory level. As a result, students in the course ranged from first year, undecided majors to senior business, economics, and Chinese majors. This was intentional, so that students could learn from one another and share their talents. The wide range of talents and interests, thus, was one consideration in developing the guidelines for a capstone project in this course. The capstone project also provides an opportunity to address a further concern voiced by Naughton et al (2007), the concern that integration of a liberal arts foundation with Catholic business education has been left up to the students. The "gulf between liberal arts and business curriculum" is of concern because "it creates the impression in students that they are receiving two types of education: one that makes them more human, and the other that makes them more money. . . ." (5)

The "Instructions for Capstone Project" are included in the Appendix to this paper, but it may be useful to identify several essential elements:

- Desire to limit the capstone project to one that is appropriate for a one-credit hour course
- Flexibility to allow students to expand their chosen project for additional independent study credit
- Wish to integrate the project (and EoC concepts) with other areas of interest, major, or concentration
- Encouragement of creativity and collaboration among students.

One important phase of the project development was the “brainstorming” period. Following the visit from EoC executives (after week 6), students were asked to select an article from among those available at the international EoC website (<http://www.edc-online.org/uk/testi.htm>) and to provide their reflections on the chosen articles. Many of these papers relate the EoC model to other areas, such as psychology, governance, etc. A week later, students were asked to find a textbook or article that sets forth foundational concepts or principles that are important to their intended major or other area of interest. They were asked to try to relate what they had learned about the EoC project to their areas of interest. By the tenth week of the course, they had begun to share their project ideas via the Discussion Board. The results of this inquiry were far-ranging and amorphous, but they provided the students with a starting point. Students were encouraged to look for areas of collaboration and their various proposals were summarized on the board in class. They quickly found areas in which they could work together. One student who wanted to create a web site for the course, but who had no prior experience, was quickly joined by three other students who wanted to assist with the project. Once again, the intent was to model the principles of an EoC business as they relate to reciprocity and collaboration. The range and scope of completed student projects is illustrated by the project descriptions that may be found at the Trinity EoC class web site (which was, itself, one of the projects) (<http://trinityeoc.googlepages.com>).

### **EoC INTERNATIONAL YOUTH INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

For the past 15 years, EoC profits that have been committed to the spreading of the “culture of giving” have been used to support conferences, seminars and workshops at the Movement’s thirty “little cities” throughout the world (Mundell & Colella 2008). These centers of formation have been instrumental in providing an economic, business and theological grounding for those wishing to understand the spiritual and philosophical roots of the EoC project. In 2004, a pilot internship program was begun in order to give young people the experience of working in an EoC business--providing technical training in their areas of interest, as well as spiritual formation relating to the ideals and goals of the EoC project (Mundell 2008b). Although a review of the many aspects of experiential learning is beyond the scope of this paper, it has been described as “the process that links education, work, and personal development” (Kolb 1984, 4). The well-known Lewinian model of experiential learning has been described as consisting of four elements, which are repeated in a loop:

- Concrete experience,
- Observations and reflections (on the experience),
- Formation of abstract concepts and generalizations, and
- Testing implications of concepts in new situations (Kolb 1984, 21).

The experiential model, itself, is rather descriptive of a process that has been familiar in the development of the Movement, with its “little cities” and its programs of formation based on a lived spirituality. The EoC internship program continues in this vein, as it “aims at providing young people with a hands-on educational laboratory for learning the fundamental ideals of solidarity and brotherhood within the workplace” (Mundell 2008a). According to Mundell (2008b), the internships give students an opportunity to:

- see first-hand how Catholic social thought connects with actual business practice;
- experience the concrete implications of a “people first” management style; and
- share in the experiences of both entrepreneurs and employees who attribute their personal sense of vocation and life’s meaning to their application of EoC principles.

Participating entrepreneurs provide financial support for the interns and also provide a model of the EoC’s Gospel-based approach to business relationships. The internships consist of an immersion experience into the day-to-day operations of the business. They include training in technical, managerial, and ethical aspects of the business. Interns also spend time in meetings with selected business clients and with the EoC business owners, who share their experiences of putting into practice the vision and ideals of the EoC. The interns are housed near the business with either families or young people of the Movement, who are able to continue the cultural exchange beyond working hours (Mundell 2008b). The interns also participate in local activities of the Movement and, when possible, meetings of the New Humanity NGO.

Since 2004, eleven interns from the United States, Brazil, Spain and Venezuela have participated in the program, with four EoC companies providing travel and lodging. The interns’ majors have included the fields of engineering (chemical, environmental, industrial), economics, political science, international studies, pharmaceutical science, law, and education. Mundell (2008b) reports that while the technical training each intern received was seen by each as ‘significantly’ relevant to their special interests, it has been the EoC workplace environment that has had the most profound effect on their outlooks. He provides anecdotal evidence in the form of commentary from several of the interns, as described below.

*People-first management style.* Mundell (2008b) shares the experience of an environmental engineering student from Sao Paulo, Brazil, who came to the United States for a six month internship with an EoC business. During her internship, she completed requirements for health and safety training certifications and was involved in both field and office environmental studies related to the investigation and cleanup of soil and groundwater contamination. Mundell shared her comments: “The Economy of Communion appears. . .as a hope that a united and a just world are possible.” She was especially struck by the EoC’s people-centered business style, as she continued, “[f]or me to work in an EoC company was the concretization of a project that aims not only for the communion of profits, but beyond that, the relationship with the people in and out of the company, ‘treating each one as you would like to be treated,’ creating in the company a mutual helping atmosphere . . . a family atmosphere.” (Mundell 2008b)

Another intern, a pharmaceutical science major who had assisted with database development during her internship, expressed a similar sentiment: “I felt part of something bigger than all of us...there is a feeling of camaraderie between employees, regardless of who has been at the company longer, has had more experience, or is even older in age.” (Mundell, 2008a)

A law student in Sao Paulo, Brazil, working in a EoC business, learned about regulations affecting the company’s operations in Brazil and translated environmental documents into the Portuguese language. She remarked, “Through my experience I could see that when you treat the employees equally, listening and respecting their opinion, worrying about their family, paying a fair salary, respecting their limits, they end up acting the same way among themselves. They start to care about each other, about the company, looking for better solutions to help the company improve.” (Mundell 2008b)

Connection with Catholic Social Thought. Commentary provided by a graphic design and animation major revealed the strong connections he made with the spiritual basis for the EoC during his internship--“Working in an EoC business was exciting because every day I would get up and remind myself that loving was the most important task that I had to do for that day.” I could say that the experience was both divine and practical, but in hindsight, really, it was all divine because God was present in the mutual love practiced there.” (Mundell 2008a) He had worked developing a website that has become an important sales and marketing tool for the EoC business.

Vocation and Meaning. During their internships, the students said they experienced the ‘giving and receiving’ well-known within an EoC company, and contributed to the success of the EoC businesses with their own unique skills. Mundell (2008b) reports that one student from Sao Paulo negotiated a reduction in costs for a surveying contract and provided valuable translation and cultural support for an EoC company visiting in Brazil. He also reports that another student (industrial engineering major from Barcelona, Spain) used his expertise to review appropriate pollution control equipment and write guidance documents for protecting drinking water supplies (Mundell 2008b).

A recent political science and economics graduate from Farmington Hills, Michigan, headed a sales and marketing campaign to introduce her EoC host company to new clients. She commented that “[b]eing in such an environment on a day-to-day basis enabled me to understand the crucial and powerful role relationships play in the workplace, and to see how the ‘wider vision’ of the company served as the underlying motivation for many of its activities within its field of work, and within the community”. (Mundell 2008a). She continued, “Everyone involved in the EoC shares the same desire to transform the business place through relationships based on reciprocal love.” (ibid)

The comments made by interns illustrate the development of “relationship capital” that is regarded as an integral part of the EoC businesses. Mundell (2008b) explains that this aspect is often reinforced by the interns’ shared accommodations, which extend the experience beyond the usual working hours. He tells of one intern from Sao Paulo, who was even invited to stay in the home of an EoC company client. The intern later commented that “[t]he atmosphere in the office and in the field was full of love and even in difficult times, we always tried to make God’s

will our own. This atmosphere has overflowed into my daily life, and I am sure this experience has made me a better person...” (ibid).

The interns’ comments suggest that they are enthusiastic about an opportunity to put into practice the principles of the EoC project. The anecdotal evidence would also suggest that the businesses, themselves, are creating a linkage between principles and practice (e.g., development of “relationship capital”, mutual respect and reciprocity, encouragement of creativity and a participative environment, sharing of expertise for professional growth, and open and honest communications). While the EoC project and its international internship program are still relatively new, these shared experiences demonstrate their potential for providing young people with a vision that goes beyond “business as usual”.

## **EDUCATING FUTURE CATHOLIC BUSINESS LEADERS**

Six principles of Catholic social teaching have been identified as critical to “any organization claiming to be authentically human and consequently authentically Catholic” (John A. Ryan, 2008). As Paul VI put it, people today “listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if [they do] listen to teachers it is because they are witnesses.” (Pope Paul VI 1975) Building on this idea, the “witness” of how EoC businesses embody the core principles of Catholic social teaching is proving to be an extraordinarily effective instrument to communicate the principles themselves. The link between the principles of Catholic social teaching (in italics) and EoC business principles (see Appendix) is described below:

*Human Dignity--the intrinsic worth of each human being “simply by virtue of his or her existence as human”--* The EoC business places the human person at its center, building reciprocal relationships where each person is a gift to the other. The introduction to the EoC principles (see Appendix) calls for the behavior of owners and managers to “express their desire to respect and value, at all times, the dignity of every human person both within and outside of their businesses.”

*The Common Good--promotion of the common good in the wider community, as well as within the organization--*EoC businesses are grounded in the “golden rule”, where each stakeholder (within or outside the business) is treated as the decision-maker would like to be treated. Considering both internal and external relationships, EoC businesses evaluate the impact of their products and services based on the “well-being of intended customers”, fair competition, and other aspects of “relationship capital”.

*Subsidiarity—participation in decision-making and encouragement of creativity--*EoC businesses strive to “actively encourage innovation, creativity, responsibility, and planning in a participative environment.” They focus on building “harmony in the working environment”, promoting the development of “structures that foster teamwork and personal development” and fostering open and honest communication within the organization.

*Justice—just distribution of goods that meets needs and rewards contributions--*For the benefit of all employees, EoC businesses strive to provide “a competitive benefits package including specific measures intended to help employees and their families in times of hardship”. The businesses also address the quality of life and production.

*Stewardship—effective use of resources, care for the environment, and sustainability*—EoC businesses strive to focus on ethical issues, quality standards and the impact of services or products on their intended users, the production of safe and environmentally friendly products, and the conservation of natural resources.

*Solidarity with the poor—to promote dignity and provide opportunities through “solidarity” rather than simply through philanthropy*-- EoC businesses voluntarily share a portion of their profits with those in need “in an atmosphere of mutual support and trust”, promoting a “culture of giving”.

EoC businesses, at least as viewed from their stated purposes, may be deemed in conformance with the description of an authentically human and, therefore, an authentically Catholic organization. What, then, is required before this model can make a contribution to Catholic business education?

Naughton et al (2007) identify four cultural dimensions for an integrating vision of Catholic business education. These four dimensions are briefly described below (italics), with a notation of the contribution toward each that can be made by the EoC project:

*Integration of virtue and technique—“the integration of moral ends with the proper means of business. . .[with students] ordering their skills and techniques toward the common good and human development.”* The EoC project has much to offer in this area, as illustrated by the EoC principles, which do not leave sound business practices at the doorstep, but imbue these practices with Gospel values. As a result, the EoC businesses often experience the biblical “hundredfold” when they choose to go against the current of conventional business practices. They sometimes experience God’s providence in the form of “unexpected revenue, an unforeseen opportunity, the offer of a new joint venture, the idea for a successful new product. . .”(Lubich 1999a, 277) as a manifestation of God’s loving intervention. Furthermore, the integration of virtue and technique is evident in the shared experiences of EoC businesses, which engage in teleconferences on a regular basis in order to share experiences and to assist one another. Students can be brought into this shared experience through student memberships in EoC associations (with their quarterly newsletters), through EoC speakers, and through various readings.

*Integration of faith and reason (extension of liberal arts)—“engage[ing] the business student in the deeper questions of business: the nature of the human person, property, and work/profession; the difference between wants and needs; the role of business within society. . .”* The “culture of giving” of the EoC project has been studied from various liberal arts perspectives; e.g., economics and psychology. Both its foundation, in the social doctrines of the Church, and its practice offer opportunities to “personalize the meaning of business” and to engage in a conversation of faith and reason. The aim of the EoC is to “transform from within [the] usual business structures. . .establishing all relationships inside and outside the business in the light of a lifestyle of communion.” (Lubich 1999a, 276) Classroom projects not only give the students an opportunity to integrate their “other” education with their business education, but can serve as a vehicle for dialogue with other members of the university community.

*Integration of faith and work—addressing the “divided life”--a compartmentalization of private faith and public actions in professional life by introducing students to Catholic social tradition and Catholic spiritual tradition.* There are a number of contributions that the EoC project has to offer in this area. The EoC project found its inspiration in the social doctrine of the Church and its manifestation in the lives of those who have chosen to live the spirituality of unity. The very principles of the EoC businesses find their source in the Gospel and call for a lived faith. Lubich (1999a, 276) describes the linkage between the practices of EoC businesses and the “view of the world that comes from [the] spirituality [of unity]”—with EoC business people striving “to make this aspect of their life consistent with everything else they do.” She expresses the conviction that it is “necessary to let the values we believe in shape every aspect of social life, and therefore also economic life, so that it too can become a field of human and spiritual development.” Furthermore, business owners are able to participate in “schools”—short term programs held in many different parts of the world—that help them to learn more and to grow in the EoC lifestyle. The EoC has also made contributions toward the integration of business practices with religious values and lifestyle through sponsorship of annual meetings of business owners, as well as through participation in conferences such as the 2004 conference on Religious Values and Corporate Decision-Making sponsored by the Fordham University Institute on Religion, Law & Lawyer’s Work (Uelmen 2004). Students are able to explore the connections between private faith and public action through the numerous anecdotal articles, videos, speakers, and internship experiences that provide evidence of the linkage between the faith and professional life of EoC entrepreneurs.

*Integration of business and the needs of the poor—forming students “to see the ‘expanding chain of solidarity’ in which business operates, but not at the expense of its service as a business.”* With its genesis in the slums of Brazil and its goal of forming reciprocal relationships between those in need and those with means of assistance, the EoC provides a model of solidarity between businesses and all stakeholders—within the business, outside of the business, and with the broader community. It has its foundation in the Church’s preference for the poor, but sees those in need as brothers and sisters who also make a contribution in mutual love. Lubich (1999a, 277) explains that the EoC “is not based upon the philanthropy of a few, but rather upon sharing, where each one gives and receives with equal dignity in the context of a relationship of genuine reciprocity.” The EoC is intended to be an outreach to the world where all people of good will can work together to eradicate poverty, always being focused on the dignity of each person.

## **CONCLUSION**

The EoC project, with its genesis in Catholic social doctrine and the spirituality of unity, offers a resource for Catholic business education. Although it originated from a desire to assist those in need, it calls participants to love everyone (not just the poor) in response to the Gospel message of brotherhood. With its focus on reciprocity and respect for human dignity, it places the human person at the center of a business and goes beyond corporate social responsibility or philanthropy. It considers all possible stakeholders—management, employees, customers, competitors, and the broader community--as candidates for unity. The economic and relational life of the businesses are based on Gospel principles freely adopted by entrepreneurs, who also freely commit their profits to three purposes: assistance to those in need, formation of “new men and women” in a culture of giving, and reinvestment in the businesses. The EoC project links

life with theory, offering business people, academics, and students a pragmatic lifestyle where Catholic social doctrine is the foundational standard for action. From a pedagogical viewpoint, there is also a range of resources developed from the linkage of belief and practice--including academic papers, anecdotal articles, guest speakers, and internship opportunities.

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