

Opening Talk
***The Fourth International Symposium on Catholic Social
Thought and Management***
Puebla, Mexico

July 11, 2000

Michael Naughton

1) Welcome: On behalf of the organizing committee, it is a great pleasure to share with you in these next few days a common endeavor to explore the meaning of wealth creation and distribution within the Catholic social tradition. Many of you have come a great distance to be here. For your presence we are very grateful. Twenty-five countries are represented. Our wish is that at the end of these few short days

- we will be more of a community than when we started,
- we will know more than when we arrived and
- we will be ever more committed to order our work as educators, administrators, and businesspeople to the common good and God's kingdom.

2) Thank you: As you know, conferences like these do not just happen. Much planning and effort is needed. Our hosts here at Iberoamericana have been outstanding and gracious. First, I would like to thank **FR. CARLOS VELASCO S.J.**, Rector of the Universidad Iberoamericana. His hospitality has made available the resources of the university to make this conference possible. Two critical resources he has made available are Ramiro Bernal and Alberto Fisher along with their staff. They have been working a long time in preparation not only for this conference but also for the Jesuit deans conference. Please join me in a warm applause for their efforts.

I would also like to extend a particularly warm thank you to St. John's University College of Business Administration in New York, in particular Charlie Clark, who as co-chair has been particularly helpful in guaranteeing funds for the conference.

I am also thankful for the University of St. Thomas, in particular the Center for Catholic Studies and the John A. Ryan Institute for Catholic Social Thought, the Graduate School of Business, and the Aquinas Foundation, as well as an Anonymous Donor. Their financial contributions have been critical.

And for someone who does not know Spanish, I am heavily indebted for the services of Sr. Catherine McNamee as well as Fr. Mele who have been invaluable in translating the brochure and various messages that I received.

3) Jubilee Year and Wealth Creation and Wealth Distribution: The role of Catholic social thought and the Catholic university—The Cultural and Economic Question

It is significant that we gather to examine a complex set of questions of wealth creation and wealth distribution during this Jubilee Year. The origins of the Jubilee (every 50 years), found in the First Testament (Leviticus 25) emerged from the created order on the relationship between rest and work. The Jubilee Year is known as the Great Sabbatical Year, the Sabbath of Sabbaths, a year of rest, of allowing the land to lie fallow, of Israel rejuvenating and recommitting itself to God's covenant.

The Jubilee year also emerged out of the reality that all is not well in the world and that serious healing needs to take place. In the First Testament, widespread land ownership was a critical condition for just and right relationships. Yet, due to various reasons, people became alienated from their land, heavily indebted, and enslaved. The Jubilee was a time to amend these inequities and have everyone, as stated in Leviticus, "return to his property" (Leviticus 25). For property monopoly was contrary to the will of God, and the Jubilee served as a correction to increasing concentration of land ownership in Israel (Isaiah 5:8-10). In his Apostolic Letter on this new millennium (*Tertio millennio adveniente*), John Paul II recalls that the "purpose of the Jubilee Year was precisely to reestablish equality among all the children of Israel, opening new possibilities to families that had lost their goods and even personal liberty."

While most scripture scholars agree that this return of property and redistribution of wealth was more of an idea than a practical law, the Jubilee was a time to remind all God's people that the land is not theirs. God is the owner, and as His stewards we are responsible to share the fruits of that land. The Jubilee is an occasion to see ever more clearly that our religious beliefs really do matter, especially as they relate to economic life.

In this Jubilee year of 2000, the Church has asked us to take a serious and more contemplative look at our current economic system, our businesses, our way of educating, and our own spiritual lives. In his New Year's Message of 2000, John Paul II has asked "*for a new and deeper reflection on the nature of the economy and its purposes.*" Our conference, I hope, will be an instance of this new and deeper reflection, of opening ourselves to new ways of looking at this critical issue of wealth creation and distribution, and to reexamine and rethink our notions of property, ownership, work, wealth, wages, knowledge, and so forth so as to recommit ourselves to our particular vocation. As many of you noted in your papers, by rethinking these fundamental categories of economic life, we may actually educate a new class of businesspeople who view wealth creation as a vocation and charism, and who see themselves as distributors of justice and not maximizers of self-interest.

If we are to take this Jubilee Year seriously, if it is to be something more than mere prophetic moralisms, more than pious platitudes, more than distant history, we face the challenge of how to translate the Jubilee of a just distribution of resources that originated in an agricultural-based economy to the complexities of a knowledge-based global economy.

Contribution of Catholic Social Thought:

Of course, as many of you have indicated in your papers, this is not an easy task. We need many resources to do it well. One resource, which is the focus of this conference, is the Catholic Social Tradition. What makes this resource of significant importance can be characterized by its distinctive marks as a social vision, marks which have been manifested in many of your papers. The following four marks of the Catholic Social Tradition are adapted from the past work of Dennis McCann.

1) Theologically and Philosophically Grounded: As a social vision, Catholic social thought is theologically and philosophically grounded. One of the more interesting developments of the last 10 years is the growing recognition that solutions to our social problems cannot reside only at a technical level. Within the disciplines of business, medicine, law, and even the academy, there is more openness now to examine spiritual, theological, and philosophical knowledge of the issues and problems particular to each field.

2) Publicly Argued: The grounding in theology and philosophy, however, should not be used as an excuse for a certain group of people to talk only among themselves. Catholic Social Thought must be publicly argued. Within this tradition there is a confidence that its ideas are publicly and intellectually accessible to people outside its own faith commitment, and that as a body of knowledge and action the Catholic social tradition can develop through an engagement with other religious and non-religious traditions. Yet, in order to argue well publicly and to learn from others, we must be informed by the best of our own particular tradition.

3) Comprehensively Engaged: Catholic social thought cannot be the domain of one discipline. It examines human and social issues within a broad Catholic vision. While theology and philosophy are necessary to Catholic social thought they are by themselves an insufficient expression of its full potential. This interdisciplinary context reflects a significant challenge to universities whose organizational structure departmentalizes knowledge into specialized disciplines.

4) Institutionally Embodied: As John Paul explained, “Today more than ever, the church is aware that her social message will gain credibility more immediately from the witness of actions than as a result of its internal logic and consistency” (*Centesimus annus*, 57). We must always push to see what the social teachings look like in practice. For we cannot become “moralizers” of the kind Jesus condemns in the Gospel: those who make heavy demands, but who never lift a finger in aid of others who must shoulder them. This is why scholars and practitioners must work together to explore how principles of Catholic social thought achieve organizational embodiment (see companies such as Mondragon and Reell, as well as movements such as Focalare).

Conclusion: The Mission of Catholic Universities: These marks of the Catholic social tradition provide a rich seedbed in which to examine the question of wealth creation and wealth distribution. In particular, as John Paul states, these marks of the Catholic social

tradition should sensitize us to a deep commitment to justice, especially to those who suffer from the “intolerable social and economic inequalities.” It is this commitment, John Paul states, that serves as a “necessary condition for the preparation and celebration of the Jubilee.”

This Jubilee, then, poses for us as educators a serious, and at times a daunting challenge: **How do we foster within our universities, with our colleagues and with our students, “a profound sense of human solidarity,” an “educated concern for a just social order” and a deep and disciplined sensitivity to the suffering of others, particularly in our curriculum and research?** (Michael Buckley, 119, 111) **How do we create Catholic business schools which have a significant impact on students to help them see the social nature of capital, the mystery of human labor, business as a vocation and ever expanding notion of the common good? Or more simply how do we help our students and ourselves to become more fully human?**

Before I left for this trip I was talking to Bob Wahlstedt who is the co-author of the paper I am delivering later in the conference. Bob is founding member of a manufacturing company in St. Paul, Minnesota and he is Protestant and a former trustee of a Protestant university. He told me that Catholic universities, and in particular their business schools, have at their disposal a rich body of thought in the Catholic social tradition that places them in a unique position to teach students that business can become a means to human development.

While a wonderful opportunity, it is also a significant burden that entails nothing less than virtue, particularly the virtues of courage and prudence. For how do we develop and manifest a form of education that is technically competent and morally and spiritually grounded? How do we educate our students in justice and peace so as to celebrate the Jubilee that can make our globe in the next 50 years a more humane place to live?

In light of this challenge, and the realization that we cannot do this on our own, let us begin this Fourth International Symposium in this Year of the Jubilee and on the Feast of St. Benedict, in prayer with Fr. Carlos Velasco, rector of the Universidad Iberoamericana. But first let us begin in silence. A silence that calls us to receive life and God’s abundant mercy for all the times we have failed in this challenge, a silence that opens our hearts and minds to insights that we have been closed to in the past, a silence that the wise person seeks but that deafens every fool, and a silence that allows us to hear and know that our work is not our own but a collaboration with God’s grace that fosters within us a capacity to receive the world as a gift.

Prayer by Fr. Carlos Velasco S.J.:

Oración para el Seminario de Pensamiento Social Católico, en la UIA GC 11 de julio del 2000

Eterno Señor, creador de todos los seres y de todas las cosas visibles e invisibles. Dios de toda la historia, Señor y fin, fuerza y luz de toda cultura: hoy te presentamos nuestras súplicas por todos los que generan Cultura.

Lo que ellos pretenden Tú lo quieres. Tu quieres su fuerza creadora, su trabajo y su obra, pues Tú quieres que el ser humano alcance su plenitud. Amas al ser humano que, en su obra, realiza, encuentra y expresa su propio ser. El ser que es imagen y semejanza de tu propia gloria. Lo que ellos, según tu voluntad han de ser, pueden serlo sólo con tu gracia.

Te imploro sobre los participantes en este Seminario el Espíritu Santo. Suscita de entre nuestros hermanos seres humanos con fuerza creadora: pensadores, poetas, maestros, científicos. Los necesitamos.

Concede a esta comunidad, el coraje para vivir nuestra vocación de hombres y mujeres para y con los demás, que no traicionemos nuestra misión yendo tras nuestra propia comodidad.

Si los miembros de esta comunidad te aceptan y te conocen enaltecerán al hombre, y a ti te honrarán en silencio en su corazón, del que brotan sus inquietudes, insatisfacciones y sus obras. Entonces cualquier acción, por pequeña que sea, será eco de tu acción creadora. Y el relato que hacen de los abismos más sombríos lo acoges Tú con tu misericordia, como muestra de la nostalgia que sienten por tu luz, tu justicia y tu amor. En las tinieblas de este tiempo y con la pobreza de nuestro corazón, este coraje es gracia tuya. Dáselo, pues lo necesitamos. Dales el coraje del discernimiento y la decisión. Sus obras han de lograr que se reconozca que las ha creado un corazón sin reservas, que, estando abierto a todo, en todo te busca a ti y todo lo busca en ti. Haz que digan lo que tu Espíritu les ha infundido en el corazón, no lo que quieren escuchar los poderes en los que se encuentra la mediocridad. Cuando se sientan fracasados, haz que también entonces crean que lo que parece inútil no lo es para ti, que Tú te has quedado fascinado mirando su obra y que has metido en el tuyo su corazón roto.

Tu Hijo ha asumido todo lo humano como cosa suya. Por eso toda obra de cultura resulta un fragmento de la propia historia de tu Palabra. Jesús vino al mundo para participar de nuestra vida, sufrimientos y para transfigurarlos. Haz que to comprendan aquellos por los que te suplicamos.

Todas nuestras obras constituyen inexorablemente un fragmento de la cruz o un anuncio y signo de la presencia de tu Reino, Reino de la transfiguración del ser humano, hecho de cuerpo y espíritu, de tierra y cielo.

Por eso concédeles que sean de los que anuncian y acrecientan ese Reino, en el que ?transformado y transfigurado? se salva para siempre todo lo que el ser humano ha forjado como partícipe de tu poder creador.

Amén.

English Translation:

Prayer for the Symposium of Catholic Social Thoughts, in the UIA GC

June 11, 2000

Eternal Father, creator of all beings and of all visible and invisible things. God of all history, Lord and end, strength and light of all culture: today we present to you our petitions for all those that create culture.

What they ask, You want. You encourage their creative strength, their work and labor, because You want human beings to reach their fullness. You love a person who, in his/her work, accomplishes, finds and expresses his/her own being. Human beings are the image of Your glory. What they do, according to your will, they are able to do only with Your grace.

I beg that you send down the Holy Spirit upon the participants of this seminar. Bring about among our brothers and sisters, human beings with creative strength: thinkers, poets, teachers, scientists. We need them.

Grant this community, the courage to live our vocation of men and women, for and with others, so that we will not betray our mission, seeking rather our own comfort.

If the members of this community accept you and know you, they will exalt mankind and will honor you in the silence of their hearts, from where spring up their concerns, dissatisfaction and their works. Then, any action, even the smallest one, will be the echo of your creative action. You will receive the story that comes from the darkest abyss with your mercy, as a symbol of the longing they feel for your light, your justice and your love. In the darkness of our time and the barrenness of our hearts, this courage is your grace. Please give them your grace, as they are in need of it. Give them the courage to discern and make decisions. His/her work will obtain the recognition of something created by a heart without reservation, that will look for you in everything and will search for everything in you. Make them say what the Holy Spirit put in their heart, and not what the powers around them want them to say. When they feel they have failed, help them to believe that what appears useless is not that way for you, that You lovingly look upon their work and that You have placed their broken hearts in yours.

Your Son has taken all that is human as His own. That is the reason that from all works of culture result a fragment of the true history of your Word. Jesus came to this world to

participate in our lives, sufferings and to glorify them. Make those for whom we pray understand this.

All our works are without exception a fragment of the cross or announcement and sign of the presence of your Kingdom, the Kingdom of the transfiguration of the human being, made of body and spirit, of earth and heaven.

For all of these participants, grant them the grace to announce and lead others to that Kingdom, in which -transformed and transfigured- everything that the human being has created as part of your creating power will be saved forever.

Amen