

**The Fifth International Symposium on Catholic Social Thought and Management Education:
“Business as a Calling, the Calling of Business” (vocation and calling as it relates to business)**

Business as a Calling, no Doubt but, Which Business?

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Introduction

Does the company constitute a call (vocation) for the catholic Christian? This question has a special sense if we focus on the actions of the catholic Christian farther than the plane of his/her personal relations with other persons of the organization, plane in which there is always space for evangelization and charity. However, in this work we are mainly worried about the institutional plane. Therefore, we are principally interested on the evangelization **of the** company, rather than in the evangelization **within** the company.

I. The Company as a Call, a Reality.

Since the beginning of times, according to the Genesis, first the Creator, with his work of six days to “complete” the creation and later, the human being, once expelled from the Paradise, have worked hard in the “creation of value”. God him/herself states it, in the moment of the abandonment of the Paradise: “... *With fatigue you will get from the soil the food every day of your life*” ... “*with the sweat of your face you will eat the bread, until you go back to the soil from which you were formed. You were made from soil, and you will become soil again*” (Ge 3, 17b, 19).

Much later, we find several references in The New Testament on the value of work and the value of enterprise. Specially relevant are the ones from saint Paul, who underlines repeatedly the importance of work and how he always sustains economically by himself: “... *day and night with fatigue and tiredness we work for not being a load for none of you ... we order and exhort in our Lord Jesus Christ that you work with serenity to eat your own bread*” (2 T 3, 8, 12). And, no doubt, several parables of the gospel refer directly or indirectly to the matter.

In our times, it is easy to find references to work and companies in documents of the church and of the Holy Father. The apostolic letter “Novo Milenio Ineunte”, at the end of the Jubileum 2000 and the beginning of the year 2001, states in its point 46 that “*it is necessary to discover better every time the proper vocation of the laity, called to seek the reign of God paying attention to the temporal realities and ordering them according to God, and to carry out in the Church and in the world the part corresponding to them ... with their effort to evangelize and to sanctify the people*”.

Moreover, the catholic exhortation *Christifidelis Laici* (1988) stated, in the point 43, that “... *in the context of the disturbing transformations that occur today in the world of the economy and work, the laity have to commit themselves , in first row, to solve the very serious problems of the increasing unemployment, to fight for the most immediate overcoming of the numerous injustices coming from deformed labor organizations, to convert the place of work in a community of persons respected in their subjectivity and in their right to participation, to develop new forms of solidarity among those that participate in the common work, to stir up new forms of managerial initiative and to review the systems of commerce, of financing and of technological interchanges*”.

To conclude on the validity of this call, it is enough to remember that Jesus himself and his adopted father Saint Joseph, developed an activity as small entrepreneurs with their carpentry workshop: “*Isn't he the carpenter, the son of Mary ... ?*” (Mk 6, 3a). The same was lived by several of the apostles through their activity as artisan fishermen.

The set of references and arguments already stated confirms the validity of the call to the catholic Christian to the evangelization **of the** company, which constitutes a pending challenge.

II. The Company with Evangelical Values.

The real question does not seem to be -I would say, it is not- business as a calling or vocation, but **which business**.

In one of the parables (Mathew 20, 1-16) God is presented as a business man (land owner, farmer) who hires workers at several times of the day. However, he does not reward them in the way we commonly do. He uses a different criterion, an evangelical criterion, that He denominates, in the versicle 16, as following the criterion of love: “... *Or do you have envy since I am good?*”. Therefore, there is not lack of calling or vocation to business, but clearly the call is to a business impregnated by the values of the Gospel. The call is to a different enterprise, oriented by creativity, solidarity and love. His Holiness John Paul II, has touched this point in many documents, especially in *Centesimus Annus* and *Laborem Exercens*.

The following question comes in a natural way:

Which kind of company, endowed of evangelical values, is the answer for the XXI century?

The following characteristics can be stated:

1. Commitment and Service to its Clients.

In modern companies it is spoken about “orientation to the clients” and “service”; however, many times this constitutes a set of steps made in a mechanical way more than a profound and authentic attitude. The company with evangelical values must possess, embodied in each one of its members, an effective service attitude, based in true love.

2. Commitment and Service to the Society that it Belongs.

The commitment and service, based in a sincere and effective attitude, must extend to the whole society to which the company belongs. Therefore, it is necessary that it makes commitments with activities of public good of different kinds, that do not contaminate, developing every possible effort to increment employment and benefits for workers, etc. The company can not be seen as isolated of the society, and it must consider itself as co-constructor of the later.

The commitment of the company with the society begins in the delivering of products and services of real value (quality) for its clients; this needs to be based in the quality of the processes, in permanent improvement. In a natural form, this extends to the need that the whole company be of quality, which needs to be supported by the living of solid values and principles. Therefore, the company acts as a “good citizen”, being and acting according to what it is today internationally known as “social responsibility of the company”.

3. Commitment with the Global World.

In the growing globalization, unleashed mainly by the advance in communications and transport means, the limits of a society are diffuse and our actions affect the whole humanity. Thus, the commitment and service of the company endowed of evangelical values requires having global dimensions.

4. Solidarity Among its Members.

The organization must be strongly influenced by a current of affection and solidarity among its members, which at the same time should cross its frontiers. In some sense this is the source of the commitment and service towards its clients and the society.

The stated “current” needs to be impelled by the high management and must be expressed as “have the people in the first place”. In some sense, this last element will be the principal test of the spirit that must inspire the whole company endowed of evangelical values, which must be transformed in actions that reflect and reinforce it.

5. Team Work as Work Culture of the Organization.

Modern companies require, to be efficient and effective, that their processes develop by means of a very good team work. The complexity of modern processes, in which usually several persons participate, even from different areas, require that team work be a fundamental strategy management. It is important to point out that such team work can not be only a competitive strategy without a real substance, but it has to be a result of the current of affection and solidarity within the organization.

6. Personal Quality.

An essential characteristic of the members of those companies has to be their personal quality, translated in living according to profound values, personal life that it is reflected in the organization. Thus, every activity of preparation in this sense is very important.

The personal quality of the members of the organization is strongly influenced by the attitude and example of their leaders and managers. Workers tend to imitate and follow them.

7. Global Vision, Local Action, Future Perspective.

Companies need to have, in a global world as the present, a global vision that allow them to make decisions with amplitude, considering diverse possibilities. However, in order to deliver the best possible service to its clients, must have a spirit to carry out its actions according to local characteristics. Additionally, with the purpose of generating keenness and for the planing of its following years, a company must put a future perspective in all its actions and initiatives.

An extraordinary example of this characteristic in real life is constituted by saint Ignatius of Loyola and the organization that he founded with his first companions: the Company of Jesus. Ignatius lives the globalization in his life, in his trips (usually alone and by foot), and especially from his role as General Superior of the Company during the last years of his earthly life. In this period, his vision of the Company and the world are remarkable, as well as his action and advice to each jesuist according to his specific situation in each country or region, and his incredible (even touching) perspective of future. It can be said that Ignatius lived the Company from today and forever.

III. The Company Endowed of Evangelical Values (the New Kind of Company) and its Anthropological Relation, Which Kind of Human Being it Proposes?

The company endowed of evangelical values proposes a human being that lives accordingly to such values, being or not being in an explicit form the religious faith in Jesus, truly man and truly God. Our proposition is wider: the XXI-st century requires human beings that live the values of the Gospel as an anthropology that goes beyond any explicit religious faith.

A world in permanent change, with the need of living together with big cultural differences, with different visions, with very different access to richness, to knowledge and technology, poses the need of basing life in common and solid values. The evangelical values, based in love to God and to fellows, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength ... (and) love your neighbor as you love yourself*" (Mc 12, 30-31), must guide the actions of all believers and also, in relation to their behavior with their fellows, of the nonbelievers and the faithful of other religions. Moreover, the evangelical values, generate an universal ethics, and in my opinion, the unique ethics able to "save" the world, in the sense of impelling peacefulness and progress of all human beings in the XXI-st and the following centuries. The deepness of the evangelical values, established inside the spirit of each human being by means of the natural law, are, besides, the unique ones able to make possible to

reach the happiness to which everyone is called **already here in the Earth**. “... *The Kingdom of God is within you*” (Lk. 17, 21b).

IV. An Spirituality for the Society of the XXI-st Century: the Spirituality of Unity.

Based in the sentence of the Master “... *they may all be one; as You, oh Father, are in Me, and I are in You ...*” (Jn, 17, 21), the Focolare Movement or Mary’s Opus was born in 1943 in Trento, Italy, in middle of bombs and the horrors of the Second War World, the biggest international conflagration that humanity has ever known. It was born, specially, a new spirituality, a collective one, based on a special charisma, the “charisma of unity”.

“We live to be one with Him (God) and one among us and with everyone. This splendid vocation joins us to Heavens and submerges us in the universal fraternity” (Chiara Lubich “Unity and Jesus Abandoned”, New City Editorial, Madrid 1992).

Growing steadily and systematically, the focolare movement congregates today more than two million people at world level, in two hundred countries, belonging to more than three hundred religious credos, although conserving its catholic matted roots.

In this way and based in the spirituality of the movement, it has been getting shape a “life style”, that has expanded to every field, including politics and economy. This life style supposes, in first place, to contemplate God by what He is: Love, Father; opening the heart to Him, believing deeply in his love. From that love, it is naturally born to consider the others as brothers and consequently the commitment to be the first in loving. From there the idea of “making oneself one with the others”.

This spirituality of collective character corresponds to a progressive development within the spiritualities of the (Catholic) Church. Many spiritualities, previously historically developed, have emphasized an individual search of saintliness, based on an inner retreat and on solitude in relation with their brothers. However, the development reached by humanity, generating a great number of very diverse cultures, and its “closeness” due to the advancement of telecommunications and transport, phenomenon that has been brought by the “globalization”, has required and made possible the development of the “Spirituality of the Unity”, in profound agreement with the Gospel.

Such spirituality has among its specific points that God Love is the original source of unity; that is necessary to accept God’s will and that by getting closer to Him we get closer among the human beings. Thus, the base of the relations of the persons and the peoples is the “reciprocal love”, not mattering the differences. It feeds this love “Jesus Abandoned” in the cross, crucial moment of the sacrifice of the Lord and of His identification with the human beings. “Jesus Abandoned” is the unleashing factor of Unity. Perhaps the most concrete expression of the “Spirituality of Unity” is the construction of the “Exterior Castle”, as complement of the “Inner Castle” conceived by saint Therese of Jesus. The expression “Live in the Earth as if we were already in Heaven” summarizes in a magnificent form the focolare spirituality.

V. Elements of an Spirituality of Unity in the Spirituality of Alberto Hurtado, S.J.

Luis Alberto Miguel Hurtado Cruchaga (1901-1952), is for sure the best known of the Chilean jesuist priests. He reached the honor of altars by being beatified by His Holiness John Paul II in 1994. A great intellectual, lawyer (Catholic University of Chile, 1922) and first Chilean doctor in Pedagogic Sciences (University of Louvain, Belgium, 1934), was director of the Chilean “Catholic Action”, forming a big quantity of young people and generating, with his example and word, many priest vocations, both jesuist and diocesans. Later, dedicated to the field of social activities, founded the “Home of Christ”, main institution of help (even today) for the poor and marginal people in the Chilean society.

Alberto, getting light from the Gospel and the Ignatian Spirituality, lived a profound and demanding spirituality, with many elements of a spirituality of unity. It is especially relevant in this sense, his conviction of a co-responsibility of each person in the salvation of other human beings:

“The immense responsibility of Christians, so little meditated and however so formidable. Christianity is summarized in a law of charity, to god and to the fellow. The life of innumerable souls depends of the Christian, of his preaching and especially of his life. What he gets to be, will get to be those that God has trusted to his cares ... To the apostle it will correspond to reveal in his mortal flesh the life of his Master for the salvation of the souls” (Alberto Hurtado, meditation “The Mission of the Apostle”, f. Samuel Fernández et al. (Editors), Ed. Universidad Católica de Chile, 2002).

“How good it would be to live having consciousness of serving in our work to the whole society! A society locked in itself, is sad since it is selfish. It expands because it thinks in the others, it is so good to be good!” (Alberto Hurtado, meditation “Love to the Fellow”, f. Samuel Fernández et al. (Editors), Ed. Universidad Católica de Chile, 2002).

“To live in joy, in peace, in serenity, knowing that Christ and His mother watch over us, that we have the Father that loves us, and the Spirit that dwells in our hearts. And possessed of that joy make the others participants of it” (Alberto Hurtado, meditation “The Unity in our Spirituality”, f. Samuel Fernández et al. (Editors), Ed. Universidad Católica de Chile, 2002).

As it can be seen in the previous texts, Alberto Hurtado lived a “spirituality of unity” with his fellow human beings. His spirituality urged him, forced him to act, to donate himself completely, always full of happiness –“Happy, Lord, Happy”- in a permanent dialogue with his Master.

VI. Characteristics of Economy of Communion Companies.

A very good example of this kind of enterprises endowed of evangelical values, is the Economy of Communion Companies (EdC Companies) proposed and implemented by the Focolare Movement and based on the Spirituality of Communion. The founder and president of the

movement, an inspired woman, Chiara Lubich, started working on the idea of EdC after she visited Brazil in 1991. In that occasion, she could observe a very extended poverty in the surroundings of Sao Paulo, provoking in her the need to do “something” in relation to it; and so she visualized a “new” kind of business consequent with the evangelical values, and simultaneously not losing the character of a company that acts and needs to develop as a common one.

These companies do not only seek to make progress in the line of the common good of the society, but also are directed to aspects as the relationship between “Economy and Felicity”. It is surprising how the modern society has been losing the sense that the human being has been created by God to be happy. Instead, the society acts as if the last goal of the human being would be the performance, measured by the efficiency and efficacy in the obtaining of results. In that way, it interchanges ends with means. The EdC companies, not neglecting the means since they require to be equally competitive in relation to their capacity to maintain their present clients and to win new clients, generate in their participants a plenitude in the development of their work, given the goals and the spirit that animates them.

“Which is the empiric evidence of the relationship between (economic) growth and wellbeing? ... It is about the degree of satisfaction of the individual with his/her own life. The people does not seem to feel better with growth. This conclusion is supported by diverse studies” (Stefano Bartolini e Renato Palma: “Economia et Felicità: una Proposta di Accordo”. Economia come Impegno Civile (Luigino Bruni e Vittorio Pelligra (edd.)), Città Nuova, 2002).

The “Economy of Communion” project, still in development from the point of view of the academia, comes from the “culture of giving”, proposed by the Focolare Movement as the culture that comes from the Gospels and a culture adequate for the humanity in the third millenium. These firms, although they function under the rules of any company, have a shared purpose between the active participants in them and the owners of the capital. They all agree that the profits be divided in three parts: reinvestment in the company, support for those in need, and support for the efforts to expand the “culture of giving”. This kind of company is gaining adepts in all the world, multiplying its number as years pass. According to existing data, they were 242 in 1992, 703 in 1996 and 752 in the year 2000. In relation to the kind of activity (year 2000), 188 correspond to product companies, 328 to service companies, 153 to the commerce sector, and 83 to other activities.

In the Economy of Communion, the emphasis is principally on the co-participation, where each one gives or receives with equal dignity. Those who pass by economic difficulties, are considered active participants of the project. Besides, in these companies, it is left space for God’s intervention, also in the concrete economic activity. Very important is likewise the type of relation that it is generated among the personnel, the clients, the suppliers and the competitors. This new relation is centered on the person, relegating the economic benefit to a role of result of such a good relation, which is considered indispensable for the obtaining of positive balances. Already in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), pope Lion XIII, stated that the *“use of goods, entrusted to the own liberty, is subordinated to the original and common destiny of the created goods and also to Jesus Christ’s will, manifested in the Gospel”*.

The Economy of Communion companies are contributing to develop a new culture within the managerial community and the society at large. They promote a culture of sharing within the own firm and between the company and the society. They constitute a very good stage for developing in plenitude a vocation according to the Gospel. Naturally, as in every company participate persons each one having its own history and problems, there is always a good opportunity to live evangelical values and care for those who suffer. However, this new kind of companies, already a reality in the five continents, provide an opportunity to develop a catholic vocation, due to its mission and the values they impulse.

VI. Economy of Communion Companies in the World.

It is very interesting and important to study this kind of companies in different countries. The most up to date statistics by continent is (data from 2002):

Europe: 486 Asia: 47 Africa: 9 America: 230 Australia: 6

Italy has around half of the EdC companies in Europe, although there are very important ones in France, Germany and Spain (this last country with 13 companies in 2002). In Latin America have special importance the companies in Argentina and Brazil. In both countries, these companies have grown mainly besides the Mariapolis (small cities where the spirituality of unity is lived with intensity) Andrea (close to Buenos Aires) and Aracelli (close to Sao Paulo). They are devoted to different sectors like clothing, craftsmanship, software, etc. constituting a unity in relation to their goals, as well as the practiced spirituality.

In the case of the Mariapolis Aracelli, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the EdC companies belong to the “(Industrial) Pole Espartaco”, providing jobs for 150 persons that work in 9 companies which I describe as example:

- A. **ECO-AR:** It is devoted to cleaning products, having twenty years of existence, certified with ISO9000 norms of quality and the 14000 norms for environmental care, it also produces the chemical components that uses. It has grown at a ratio of a million liters of detergent per year (at least some years) and it is very appreciated by the Paulist Association of Supermarkets.
- B. **K.N.E. Rotomoldagem:** It is devoted to the production of Plastics for industry and commerce, under the trade mark of “Rotogine”. It has been expanded thanks to the merging of the initial company of the group Neveux, with the enterprises Estrela and Ketnis, from the group Fermaq, also adherents to EdC. The production has increased from three to ten tons per month, mainly in the sanitary market, with the production ecological units.
- C. **La Túnica (The Tunic):** It is devoted to the market of confection; it produces and sells “school uniforms” and other articles under the name “Gebé y Doblevé”. The National Service of Promotion of Small Companies of Brazil (SEBRAE) has proposed it as an example of a company that has overcome the crisis of the confection sector that has

occurred in Brazil and in many other countries. “La Túnica” was the initial EdC company, conceived immediately after Chiara Lubich’s call to create enterprises with ideal goals, made in Sao Paulo in 1991.

- D. **Prodiel:** It is devoted to the distribution of pharmaceutical articles and was originated in the state of Paraná, expanding later to the state of Sao Paulo, that counts with a market five times bigger. For the year 2002 it is foreseen sales for US 1.5 thousand millions.
- E. **A.V.N.:** It is devoted to the fabrication of plastic packages and it was begun in the plant of ECO-AR; now it has its own plant, providing employment to eighteen persons and producing a million of units per month. It counts with seven main clients, one of them being ECO-AR.
- F. **UNIBEN:** It is a travel agency, that also works on insurance and leasing contracts. It collaborates with the Itau bank and the insurance and finance company Porto Seguro.
- G. **AGAPE:** It is a clinical or medical center, located in the Vargem Grande county close to the Espartaco pole. It has widen lately its services in Radiology, Endoscopy and endocrinology, as well as its services of laboratory clinical analysis.
- H. **AURORA:** It is a Basic Education School, with courses between first and eight grade, also located in the Vargem Grande county. It counts with rooms for music, computing sciences, art, and a sport salon. It has 140 students.
- I. **COMUNION:** It is devoted to the business of counting audits. Although still small, it has been steadily increasing its number of clients.

Another very important EdC company in the state of Sao Paulo is “Informática Rubi Votuporanga Ltda.” (www.net-rubi.com.br) that provides internet services. It produces news, cultural, search and conexión to public services, search of internet addresses, etc.

A very interesting case is the bakery “La Espiga Dorada” located in the city of Cochabamba, Bolivia. Founded by two young professionals, and counting with the collaboration of other young persons, it is located close to downtown, providing a service of great quality and generating employment for several persons not initially related with the Focolare movement.

VII. The Spirituality of Communion, Looking to the Future.

In the Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte, His Holiness John Paul II calls strongly to live a “Spirituality of Communion”, that *“it means, more than anything, a watch of the heart towards the Trinitarian mystery that lives in us, and which light has to be also recognized on the face of our brothers that are at our side. Besides, it means a capacity to feel the brother in faith in the profound unity of the mystic Corp, and therefore, as “one that belongs to me”, to be able to share his/her joys and sufferings, for guessing his/her desires and attending to the needs, for offering a true and profound friendship”* (n° 43).

And it also says that *“It is the time of a new “imagination of the charity”, that promotes not much and not only the efficacy of the given helps, but also the capacity of making ourselves close with those that suffer, so that the help be felt not as a humiliating alms, but as a fraternal sharing”* (n° 50). *“Charity will convert itself in a service to the culture, to politics, to the economy, to the family, so that the fundamental principles are respected everywhere, from which it depends the destiny of the human being and the future of civilization”* (n° 51).

Furthermore, the Apostolic Letter remembers words of the Second Vatican Council in the sense that *“the Christian message does not separate the men from the job of world construction; nor impels them to forget about the well being of their fellows, but forces them more to take this as a duty”* (Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes Pastoral Constitution, n° 34).

In short, also in the Economy, looking for the well being and the happiness of the human beings, in a globalized world as the present one, with its problems, challenges and full of opportunities, John Paul II impels us to *“row further inside”*, as the Master invited Peter and his partners (Lk 5,4).

And like them, trusting, with faith and hope, we must advance and throw our nets. As the Holy Father says to us, a man already old but with a very young spirit: ***“This word resounds today also for us and invites us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with passion and to open ourselves with confidence to the future”*** (Novo Millennio Ineunte, n° 1).