

CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE

THE PRESENCE OF THE CHURCH IN THE UNIVERSITY AND IN UNIVERSITY CULTURE

Foreword: Nature, aim and intended readers of the document

The University and, more widely, university culture, constitute a reality of decisive importance. In this field, vital questions are at stake and profound cultural changes present new challenges. The Church owes it to herself to advert to them in her mission of proclaiming the Gospel.1

In the course of their "ad limina" visits, many Bishops have expressed their desire to find help in meeting new and serious problems that are rapidly emerging and for which those responsible are at times unprepared. The usual pastoral methods often prove ineffective and even the most zealous are discouraged. Various dioceses and Bishops' conferences have undertaken pastoral reflection and action that already provide elements of response. Religious communities and apostolic movements are also approaching with fresh generosity the new challenges of university pastoral action.

For a sharing of these initiatives and a global assessment of the situation, the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for Culture undertook a new consultation of the Bishops' Conferences, of religious Institutes and of various ecclesial bodies and movements. A first synthesis of the replies was presented on 28 October 1987 to the Synod of Bishops on the vocation and mission of the laity in the church and in the world.2 This documentation has been enriched in many meetings, and also by the reactions of the institutions concerned to the published text and by the publication of studies and research on the action of Christians in the university world.

It has been possible in this way to ascertain a number of facts, to formulate questions in precise terms and to indicate certain guidelines on the basis of the apostolic experience of people involved in the university world.

The present document, drawing attention to the more significant questions and initiatives, is intended as an instrument for study and action at the service of the particular Churches. It is addressed in the first place to the Episcopal Conference and, in a special way, to Bishops who are directly concerned due to the presence in their dioceses of Universities or Institutes of Higher Studies. But the facts and the orientations presented here are intended, at the same time, for all those who take part in university pastoral action under the guidance of the Bishops: priests, lay people, religious Institutes, ecclesial movements. The suggestions made for the new evangelization are meant to inspire deeper reflection on the part of all those concerned and a renewal of pastoral action.

AN URGENT NEED

The University was, in its earliest stages, one of the most significant expressions of the Church's pastoral concern. Its birth was linked to the development of the schools set up in the Middle Ages by the Bishops of the great episcopal sees. If the vicissitudes of history have led the "Universitas magistrorum et

scholarium" to become more and more autonomous, the Church nevertheless continues to nourish the same concern that gave rise to this institution.3 The Church's presence in the University is not, in fact, a task that would remain, as it were, external to the mission of proclaiming the faith. "The synthesis between culture and faith is a necessity not only for culture, but also for faith... A faith that does not become culture is a faith that is not fully received, not entirely thought through and faithfully lived".4 The faith that the Church proclaims is a "fides quaerens intellectum" that must penetrate the human intellect and heart, that must be thought out in order to be lived. The Church's presence cannot, therefore, be limited to a cultural and scientific contribution: it must offer a real opportunity for encountering Christ.

Concretely, the Church's presence and mission in university culture take varied and complementary forms. In the first place, there is the task of giving support to the Catholics engaged in the life of the University as professors, students, researchers or non-academic staff. The Church is concerned with proclaiming the gospel to all those, within the University, to whom it is still unknown and who are ready to receive it in freedom. Her action also takes the form of sincere dialogue and loyal cooperation with all members of the university community who are concerned for the cultural development of the human person and of all the people involved.

This approach requires pastoral workers to see the University as a specific environment with its own problems. The success of their commitment depends, indeed, to a great extent on the relations they establish with this milieu, and which at times are still only embryonic. University pastoral action often remains, in fact, on the fringe of ordinary pastoral action. The whole Christian community must therefore become aware of its pastoral and missionary responsibility in relation to the university milieu.

I.

SITUATION OF THE UNIVERSITY

In the space of half a century, the University as institution has undergone a notable transformation. One cannot generalize, however, about the features of this transformation in all countries. Such changes do not apply equally to all the academic centres of a single region. Each University is marked by its historical, cultural, social, economic and political context. This great variety calls for careful adaptation in the forms that the Church's presence will take.

- 1. In many countries, especially in certain developed countries, after the confrontation of the years '68-'70 and the institutional crisis that threw the University into a certain confusion, several trends, both positive and negative, emerged. Clashes and crises, and in particular, the collapse of ideologies and utopias that were once dominant, have left deep marks. The University, that was formerly reserved for the privileged, has become wide open for a vast public, both in its initial teaching and through continuing education. This is a significant feature of the democratization of social and cultural life. In many cases, students have come in such numbers that the infrastructures, the services and even traditional teaching methods can prove inadequate. In certain cultural contexts, moreover, various factors have brought about crucial changes in the position of the teaching staff. Between isolation and collegiality, diverse professional commitments and family life, they see a decline in their academic and social status, their authority and their security. The concrete situation of the students is also a cause for anxiety. Structures are often lacking for welcoming and supporting them and for community life. Many of them, transplanted far from their family to a strange town, suffer from loneliness. In addition, contact with the professors is often limited, and the students find themselves without guidance in face of problems of adjustment which they are unable to solve. At times, they have to enter an environment marked by the influence of attitudes of a socio-political kind and by the claim to unlimited freedom in all fields of research and scientific experimentation. Finally, in some cases, the young university students are confronted with the prevalence of a relativistic liberalism, a scientific positivism and a certain pessimism caused by the insecurity of professional prospects in the current economic crisis.
- 2. Elsewhere, the University has lost part of its prestige. The proliferation of Universities and their

specialization have created a situation of great disparity. Some enjoy unquestioned prestige, while others are barely able to offer a mediocre standard of teaching. The University no longer has a monopoly of research in fields where specialized Institutes and Research Centres, both private and public, achieve excellence. These Institutes and Centres are part, in any case, of a specific cultural context, of the "university culture", that generates a characteristic "forma mentis" or mindset: the importance attached to the force of reasoned argument, the development of a critical spirit, a high level of compartmentalized information and little capacity for synthesis, even within specific sectors.

- 3. Living in this changing culture with a desire for truth and an attitude of service in conformity with the Christian ideal, has, at times, become difficult. In the past, becoming a student, and even more so a professor, was everywhere an unquestionable social promotion. Today, the context of university studies is often marked by new difficulties, of a material or moral order, that rapidly become human and spiritual problems with unforeseeable consequences.
- 4. In many countries, the University meets with great difficulties in the effort for renewal that is constantly required by the evolution of society, the development of new sectors of knowledge, the demands of economies in crisis. Society aspires to a University that will meet its specific needs, starting from employment for all. In this way, the industrial world is having a notable impact on the University, with its specific demands for rapid and reliable technical services. This "professionalization" with its undeniable benefits, does not always go together with a "university" formation in a sense of values, in professional ethics and in an approach to other disciplines, as a complement to the necessary specialization.
- 5. In contrast to the "professionalization" of some Institutes, many Faculties, especially of Arts, Philosophy, Political Science and Law, often limit themselves to providing a generic formation in their own discipline, without reference to possible professional outlets for their students. In many countries, of medium development, government authorities use the Universities as "parking areas" to reduce the tensions caused by unemployment among the youth.
- 6. Another inescapable fact emerges: whereas the University, by vocation, has a primary role to play in the development of culture, it is exposed, in many countries, to two opposing risks: either passively to submit to the dominant cultural influences, or to become marginal in relation to them. It is difficult to face these situations, because the University often ceases to be a "community of students and teachers in search of truth", becoming a mere "instrument" in the hands of the State and of the dominant economic forces. The only aim is then to assure the technical and professional training of specialists, without giving of education of the person the central place it has by right. Moreover and this is not without grave consequence many students attend the University without finding there a human formation that would help them towards the necessary discernment about the meaning the bases and development of values and ideals; they live in a state of uncertainty, with the added burden for their future.
- 7. In countries which were or still are subjected to a materialistic and atheistic ideology, especially in the fields of the human sciences, of philosophy and history. As a result, even in some countries that have passed through radical changes on the political level, there is not yet sufficient freedom of thought to discern, where necessary, the dominant trends, and to perceive the relativistic liberalism that is often concealed within them. A certain scepticism begins to arise concerning the very idea of truth.
- 8. Everywhere one notices great diversification in the fields of knowledge. The different discipline have succeeded in defining their specific field of investigation and truth claims, and in recognizing the legitimate complexity and the diversity of their methods. There is a danger, becoming more and more evident, that research workers, teachers and students will close themselves within their specific field of knownledge, seeing only a fragment of reality.
- 9. In some disciplines, there is emerging a new positivism, with no ethical reference: science for the sake of science. "Utilitarian" formation takes precedente over integral humanism, tending to neglect the needs and expectations of persons, to censure or stifle the most basic questions of personal and social

existence. The development of scientific techniques in the fields of biology, communications and automation, raises new and crucial ethical questions. The more human beings become capable of mastering nature, the more they depend on technology, the more they need to protect their own freedom. This raises new questions about the approaches and the epistemological criteria of the different disciplines.

- 10. **The scepticism and indifference** engendered by the prevailing secularism exist together with a new and ill-defined searching of a religious kind. In the climate of uncertainty that characterizes the intellectual horizon of teachers and students, the University at times provides a context for the development of aggressive nationalistic behaviour. But, in some situations, the climate of confrontation gives way to conformism.
- 11. The development of university education "at a distance" or "tele-education" (correspondence, audio-visual techniques, etc) makes information more widely accessible; but the personal contact between teacher and student is in danger of disappearing, together with the human formation bound up with this indispensable relationship. Some mixed forms are a judicious combination of "tele-education" and occasional contacts between teacher and student; this could be a good way of developing university formation.
- 12. **Inter-university and international cooperation** shows real progress. The more developed academic centres can help the less advanced; this is at times, but not always, to the advantage of the latter. The major Universities can, indeed, exercise a certain technical, and even ideological "domination" beyond their national frontiers, to the detriment of the less favoured countries.
- 13. **The place women are taking in the University**, and the general widening of access to university studies already constitute a well established tradition in some countries. Elsewhere, they come as a new development, offering an exceptional opportunity for renewal, and an enrichment of university life.
- 14. The central role of Universities in development programmes brings with it a tension between the pursuit of the new culture engendered by modernity and the safeguard and promotion of traditional cultures. In responding to its vocation, however, the University lacks a "guiding idea", an anchor for its multiple activities. This is at the root of the present crisis of identity and purpose in an institution that, of its nature, is directed towards the search for truth. The chaos of thought and the poverty of basic criteria sterilize the process that should produce educational proposals capable of meeting the new problems. In spite of its imperfections, by vocation, the University, with the other Institutions of higher education, remains a privileged place for the development of knowledge and formation, and plays a fundamental role in preparing leaders for the society of the 21st century.
- 15. A renewed pastoral effort. The presence of Catholics in the University is, in itself, a question and a hope for the Church. In many countries, this "presence" is, indeed, at one and the same time, numerically impressive and relatively modest in its effect. Too many teachers and students consider their faith a strictly private affair, or do not perceive the impact their university life has on their Christian existence. Their presence in the University seems like a parenthesis in their life of faith. Some, among them even priests or religious, in the name of university autonomy, go so far as to refrain from any explicit witness to their faith. Others use this autonomy to spread doctrines contrary to the Church's teaching. This situation is aggravated by the lack of theologians with competence in the scientific and technical fields, and of professors specialized in the sciences who have a good theological formation. Obviously, this calls for a renewed awareness, leading to a new pastoral effort. Moreover, while appreciating the praiseworthy initiatives undertaken in various places, one cannot fail to see that the Christian presence often seems limited to isolated groups, sporadic initiatives, the occasional witness of well known personalities and the action of one or another movement.

1. Presence in the structures of the University

Sent by Christ to all human beings of every culture, the Church tries to share with them the good news of salvation. Having received through Christ the revealed Truth about God and humankind, she has the mission to provide, through her message of truth, an opening for authentic freedom. Founded on the mandate received from Christ, she seeks to cast light on cultural values and expressions, to correct and purify them, where necessary, in the light of faith, in order to bring them to their fullness of meaning.5

Within the University, the Church's pastoral action, in its rich complexity, has in the first place a subjective aspect: the evangelization of people. From this point of view, the Church enters into dialogue with real people: men and women, professors, students, staff, and, through them, with the cultural trends that characterize this milieu. But one cannot forget the objective aspect: the dialogue between faith and the different disciplines of knowledge. In the context of the University, the appearance of new cultural trends is, indeed, closely linked to the great questions concerning humanity: the value of the human person, the meaning of human existence and action, and especially conscience and freedom. At this level, Catholic intellectuals should give priority to promoting a renewed and vital synthesis between faith and culture.

The Church must not forget that her action is carried out in the particular situation of each university Centre and that her presence in the University is a service rendered to the people concerned in their two-fold dimension: personal and social. The type of presence is therefore different in each country, which bears the marks of its historical, cultural, religious and legislative tradition. In particular, where the legislation permits, the Church cannot forsake her institutional action within the University. She seeks to support and foster the teaching of theology wherever possible. At the institutional level, the university Chaplaincy has a special importance on the campus. By offering a wide range of both doctrinal and spiritual formation, it constitutes, in fact, an important source for the proclamation of the Gospel. Through the stimulus and awareness given through the Chaplaincy, university pastoral action can hope to achieve its aim, that is, to create within the university environment a Christian community and a missionary faith commitment.

Religious Orders and Congregations bring a specific presence to the Universities. By the wealth and diversity of their charism—especially their educational charism—they contribute to the Christian formation of teachers and students. In their pastoral options, these religious communities, that are much in demand for primary and secondary education, should take into consideration what is at stake in their presence within higher education; they should be careful not to draw back in any way, under pretext of entrusting to others the mission corresponding to their vocation.

To be accepted and influential, the Church's institutional presence in university culture must be of good quality. Often there is a lack of personnel, or at times of the necessary financial resources. This situation calls for creativity and an adequate pastoral effort.

2. The Catholic University

Among the different institutional forms of the Church's presence in the university world, emphasis must be placed on the Catholic University, itself an institution of the Church.

The existence of a large number of Catholic Universities—differing greatly according to regions and countries, from a large number to a total absence—is in itself a richness and an essential factor of the Church's presence within university culture. However, this investment does not always produce the fruit for which one might legitimately hope.

Important indications for the specific role of the Catholic University were given in the Apostolic Constitution "Ex Corde Ecclesiae", published on 15 August 1990. The Constitution points out that the institutional identity of the Catholic University depends on its realizing together its characteristics as "University" and as "Catholic". It only achieves its full identity when, at one and the same time, it gives

proof of being rigorously serious as a member of the international community of knowledge and expresses its Catholic identity through an explicit link with the Church, at both local and universal levels; an identity which marks concretely the life, the services and the programmes of the university community. In this way, by its very existence, the Catholic University achieves its aim of guaranteeing, in an institutional form, a Christian presence in the university world. From this stems its specific mission, characterized by several inseparable features.

In order to carry out its function in relation to the Church and to society, the Catholic University must study the grave problems of the day and propose solutions that express the religious and ethical values proper to a Christian vision of the human person.

Next comes university pastoral action in the strict sense. In this respect, the challenges the Catholic University has to meet are not substantially different from those confronting other academic centres. However, we should stress that an academic institution which defines itself as "Catholic" is committed to university pastoral action at the same depth as the goals it sets for itself: the integral formation of the people, men and women, who, in the academic context, are called to active participation in the life of society and of the Church.

A further aspect of the mission of the Catholic University is, finally, a commitment to dialogue between faith and culture, and the development of a culture rooted in faith. Even in this regard, if there must be concern for the development of a culture in harmony with faith wherever baptized persons are involved in the life of the University, this is still more urgent in the context of the Catholic University, called to become, in a special way, a significant interlocutor of the academic, cultural and scientific world.

Clearly, the Church's concern for the University—in the direct service of people and the evangelization of culture—necessarily has a point of reference in the Catholic University. The growing demand for a qualified presence of baptized people in university culture becomes, in this way, a call to the whole Church to become more and more aware of the specific vocation of the Catholic University and to facilitate its development as an effective instrument of the Church's evangelizing mission.

3. Fruitful initiatives already implemented

In response to the demands of university culture, many local Churches have taken appropriate action in various ways:

- 1. Appointment by the Bishops' Conference of university Chaplains with an ad hoc formation, a specific status and adequate support.
- 2. Creation, for university pastoral action, of diversified diocesan teams that show the specific responsibility of the laity and the diocesan character of these apostolic units.
- 3. First steps in a pastoral approach to University Rectors/Presidents and Faculty Professors, whose milieu is often dominated by technical and professional concerns.
- 4. Action taken for the setting up of "Departments of Religious Sciences", capable of opening up new horizons for teachers and students, and compatible with the mission of the Church. In these Departments, Catholics should play a prominent role, especially when Faculties of Theology are lacking in the university structures.
- 5. Institution of regular courses on morals and professional ethics in specialized Institutes and Centres of higher education.
- 6. Support for dynamic ecclesial movements. University pastoral action achieves better results when it is based on groups or movements and associations—at times, few in numbers but of high quality—that have the support of the dioceses and Bishops' Conferences.
- 7. Stimulus for a university pastoral action that is not limited to a general and undifferentiated "pastoral action for youth", but which takes as its starting-point the fact that many young people are deeply influenced by the "university environment". It is there, to a great extent, that they have their encounter with Christ and bear their witness as Christians. The aim is therefore to educate and accompany the young people, enabling them to live in faith the concrete reality of their milieu

- and their own activities and commitments.
- 8. Facilitating dialogue between theologians, philosophers and scientists, for a profound renewal of attitudes and to create new and fruitful relations between Christian Faith, theology, philosophy and the sciences in their concrete search for truth. Experience shows that university people, priests and especially lay people, are in the forefront in maintaining and promoting cultural debate on the great questions regarding humanity, science, society and the new challenges for the human spirit. It is for Catholic teachers and their associations, in particular, to promote interdisciplinary initiatives, and cultural encounters, inside and outside the University, combining critical method and confidence in reason, in order to bring face to face, in the language of the different cultures, metaphysical and scientific positions and the affirmations of faith.

III.

PASTORAL SUGGESTIONS AND GUIDELINES

1. Pastoral suggestions from local Churches

- 1. A **consultation** conducted by the "ad hoc" episcopal Commissions would make it possible to have a better idea of the different initiatives for university pastoral action and for the presence of Christians in the University, and to prepare guidelines to support fruitful apostolic undertakings and to promote those seen to be necessary.
- 2. The **setting up of a National Commission** for questions related to the University and to Culture would help the local Churches to share their experiences and their capabilities. It would be for the Commission to sponsor a programme of activities, reflection and meetings on "*Evangelization and Cultures*", intended for the seminaries and the formation centres for religious and laity; one section would be devoted explicitly to university culture.
- 3. At diocesan level, in university towns, it would be good to encourage the setting up of a specialized commission, composed of priests and Catholic university people, teachers and students. The aim would be to provide useful indications for university pastoral action and for the activity of Christians in the fields of education and research. The commission would be a help to the Bishop in the exercise of his specific mission of promoting and confirming the various initiatives in the diocese and facilitating contact with national or international initiatives. By virtue of his pastoral task at the service of his Church, the diocesan Bishop bears the first responsibility for the presence and pastoral action of the Church in the State Universities, as well as in the Catholic Universities and other private institutions.
- 4. **At parish level**, it would be desirable for the Christian communities priests, religious and lay faithful to pay greater attention to students and teachers, and also to the apostolate of the university Chaplaincies. The parish is of its nature a community, within which fruitful relationships can be established for a more effective service of the Gospel. It plays a considerable role through its capacity to welcome people, especially when it facilitates the setting up and functioning of "*Student Hostels*" and "*University Residences*". The success of the evangelization of the University and of university culture depends to a great extent on the commitment of the whole local Church.
- 5. The **university parish** is, in some places, an institution more necessary than ever. It supposes the presence of one or more priests, with a good preparation for this specific apostolate. The parish is unique as a milieu for communication with all the variety of the academic world. It makes possible relations with people from the fields of culture, art and science; at the same time, it allows the Church to penetrate into this complex milieu. As a place of meeting and of Christian reflection and formation, it opens to young people the doors of a Church hitherto unknown or misunderstood, and opens the Church up to the students, their questions and their apostolic dynamism. As a privileged place for the liturgical celebration of the sacraments, it is, above all, the place of the Eucharist, heart of every Christian community, source and summit of every apostolate.

- 6. Wherever possible, university pastoral action should create or intensify relations between Catholic Universities or Faculties and all other university milieus, in varied forms of collaboration.
- 7. The present situation is an urgent call to organize the formation of qualified pastoral workers within parishes and Catholic movements and associations. It urgently demands the implementation of a long-term strategy, for cultural and theological formation requires appropriate preparation. Concretely, many dioceses are not in a position to set up and carry out a formation of this kind at university level. This demand can be met by sharing the resources of dioceses, specialized religious Institutes and lay groups.
- 8. In every situation, the *presence* of the Church must be seen as a "*plantatio*" (planting) of the Christian community in the university milieu, through witness, proclamation of the gospel and the service of charity. This presence will mean growth for the "*Christifideles*" (Faithful) and a help in approaching those who are far from Jesus Christ. In this perspective, it seems important to develop and promote:
- a catechetical pedagogy characterized by a "sense of community", offering a variety of proposals, the possibility of differentiated itineraries and responses to the real needs of concrete persons;
- a pedagogy of personal guidance: welcome, availability and friendship, interpersonal relationships, discernment of the circumstances in which students are living and concrete means for their improvement.
- a pedagogy for the deepening of faith and spiritual life, rooted in the Word of god, shared in depth through sacramental and liturgical life.
- 9. Finally, the presence of the Church in the University calls for a common witness of Christians. This ecumenical witness, inseparable from the missionary dimension, is an important contribution to Christian unity. Without prejudice to the pastoral care of the Catholic faithful, ecumenical collaboration will take the forms and respect the limits established by the Church. It supposes an adequate formation and will be particularly fruitful in the study of social questions and, in general, of all questions related to humankind, to the meaning of human existence and activity.6

2. Developing the apostolate of the laity, especially of teachers

"The Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate".7 This statement of the Second Vatican Council, when applied to university pastoral action, is a resounding challenge to responsibility for Catholic teachers, intellectuals and students. The apostolic commitment of the faithful is a sign of vitality and spiritual progress for the whole Church. Developing in university people this consciousness of the duty of apostolate is consistent with the pastoral orientations of Vatican II. At the heart of the university community, faith becomes in this way a radiating source of new life, and of genuinely Christian culture. The lay faithful enjoy a legitimate autonomy in the exercise of their specific apostolic vocation. Pastors are invited, not only to recognize this specificity, but to give it warm support. This apostolate starts and develops from professional relationships, common cultural interests and the sharing of daily life in the different sectors of university activity. The individual apostolate of Catholic lay people is?" the starting-point and condition of the whole lay apostolate, even in its organized expression, and admits of no substitute".8 Nevertheless, it remains necessary and urgent for the Catholics present in the University to give a witness of communion and unity. In this respect, the ecclesial movements are particularly valuable.

Catholic teachers play a fundamental role for the Church's presence in university culture. In certain cases, their quality and generosity can even make up for imperfections in the structures. The apostolic commitment of the Catholic teacher who gives priority to respect and service for individuals — colleagues and students — offers the witness of the "new Man, always ready to render an account to anyone who asks for the hope that is in him, and to do it with courtesy and respect" (cf. 1 Pet 3: 15-16). The University is certainly a limited sector of society, but qualitatively, its influence is in greater proportion to its quantitative dimension. By contrast, however, even the figure of the Catholic intellectual seems to have almost disappeared from certain university contexts, where the students feel painfully the

lack of genuine mentors whose constant presence and availability would provide a "companionship" of high quality.

This witness of the Catholic teacher certainly does not consist in filling disciplines that are being taught with religious subject matter. Rather, it means opening up the horizon to the ultimate and fundamental questions, with the stimulating generosity of an active presence for the often inarticulate demands of young minds in search of points of reference and certainties, of guidance and purpose. Their life tomorrow in society depends on this. Even more do the Church and the University expect from priests teaching in the University a high standard of competence and a sincere ecclesial communion.

Unity grows in diversity, resisting the temptation to unify and formalize activities. The variety of apostolic initiatives and resources, far from opposing ecclesial unity, requires and enriches it. Pastors will take into account the legitimate characteristics of the university spirit: diversity and spontaneity, respect for personal freedom and responsibility, resistance to any attempt at imposing uniformity.

Catholic movements or groups should be encouraged to multiply and to grow; but it is important also to recognize and to vitalize associations of the Catholic laity that boast a long and fruitful tradition of university apostolate. The apostolate, exercised by lay people, is fruitful to the extent that it is ecclesial. The criteria for evaluation of the different commitments include doctrinal consistency with Catholic identity, together with an exemplary moral and professional standard, ensuring the radiating authenticity of the lay apostolate, of which spiritual life is the guarentee.

CONCLUSION

Among the immense fields of apostolate and action for which the Church is responsible, university culture is one of the most promising, but also one of the most difficult. This particular milieu has so great an influence on the social and cultural life of nations, and on it depends to a great extent the future of the Church and that of society. Within it the Church maintains an apostolic presence and action at both the institutional and the personal levels, with the specific cooperation of priests and lay people, administrative staff, teachers and students.

Consultation and meetings with many Bishops and university people have shown the importance of cooperation between the different ecclesial bodies concerned. The Congregation for Catholic Education, the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for Culture express again their readiness to facilitate exchanges, and to promote meetings at the level of Bishops' Conferences, Catholic International Organizations and of Commissions for Teaching, Education and Culture acting in this particular field.

Service of the individuals involved in the University, and through them, service of society, the presence of the Church in the university milieu enters into the process of inculturation of the faith, as a requirement of evangelization. On the threshold of a new millennium, of which university culture will be a major component, the duty of proclaiming the Gospel becomes more urgent. It calls for faith communities able to transmit the Good News of Christ to all those who are formed, who teach and who exercise their activity in the context of university culture. The urgency of this apostolic commitment is great, for the University is one of the most fruitful centres for the creation of culture.

"Fully aware of a pastoral urgency that calls for an absolutely special concern for culture (...) the Church calls upon the lay faithful to be present, as signs of courage and intellectual creativity, in the privileged places of culture, that is, the world of education — school and University — in places of scientific and technological research, the areas of artistic creativity and work in the humanities. Such a presence is destined not only for the recognition and possible purification of the elements that critically burden existing culture, but also for the elevation of these cultures through the riches which have their source in the Gospel and the Christian faith".9

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NOTES

- 1 This pastoral concern is evidenced in the Church's Magisterium, for example, in the addresses to university people of Pope John Paul II. (Cf. Giovanni Paolo II: *Discorsi alle Università*, Camerino 1991). Of particular significance was the Pope's address of 8 March 1982 for a "work session on university apostolate" with the clergy of Rome. (Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, 3 May 1982, pp. 6-7).
- 2 This synthesis, presented by Cardinal Paul Poupard on behalf of the three dicasteries, was published on 25 March 1988 and reproduced in several languages. (Cf. *Origins* vol. 18, N. 7, 30 June 1988, 109-112; *La Documentation Catholique*, n. 1964, 19 June 1988, 623-628; *Ecclesia* N. 2381, 23 July 1988, 1105-1110; *La Civiltà Cattolica* an. 139, 21 May 1988, N. 3310, 364-374).
- 3 Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution "Ex Corde Ecclesiae", 15 August 1990, N. 1.
- 4 John Paul II, Autograph Letter instituting the Pontifical Council for Culture, 20 May 1982, in AAS 74 (1983), 683-688.
- 5 Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical "Veritatis Splendor", n. 30-31.
- 6 Cf. Pont. Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, Vatican City, 1993, nn. 211-216.
- 7 Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, "Apostolicam Actuositatem", n. 2.
- 8 Ibid, n. 16.
- 9 John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation* "Christifideles Laici", on the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the world, 30 December 1988, n. 44.

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