

PROCEEDINGS



UNISERVITATE
Service-learning in Catholic Higher Education

UNISERVITATE COLLECTION

I Global Symposium UNISERVITATE

October 29th-30th, 2020

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Spirituality and Service-Learning

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ABOUT US

Uniservitate

Uniservitate is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning (SL) in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs). It is an initiative of Porticus and is coordinated by the Latin American Center for Service-learning (CLAYSS).

The programme's objective is to generate a systemic change through the institutionalisation of service-learning as a tool for Higher Education Institutions to fulfil their mission of offering an integral education to new generations and involving them in an active commitment to the problems of our time.

Porticus

Porticus coordinates and develops the philanthropic endeavours of the Brenninkmeijer family, whose social commitment stretches back to 1841, when Clemens and August Brenninkmeijer founded the C&A company, starting a tradition of doing good while doing business.

Several businesses, charitable foundations and philanthropic programmes joined Porticus and expanded through numerous family initiatives.

Since its foundation in 1995, Porticus has grown to become one of the most committed institutions working to address the challenges of our time, to improve the lives of those most in need and to create a sustainable future where justice and human dignity flourish.

Porticus has two goals that guide the way it works: to listen to and learn from the people it seeks to help, and to act on evidence that demonstrates what works.

CLAYSS

The Latin American Center for Service-Learning - CLAYSS - is a leading organisation for the promotion of service-learning in Latin America, and a worldwide reference. It promotes the development of service-learning in both formal and non-formal education, and advises policy makers, NGO leaders, communities, educators and students.

The UNISERVITATE Collection

The UNISERVITATE Collection is an editorial project of CLAYSS (Latin American Center for Service-Learning) in articulation with Porticus.

It is aimed at Catholic Higher Education professors and authorities, other educational institutions, specialists in Service-Learning, ecclesiastical leaders, as well as the general public interested in education and social change.

With the contribution and collaboration of outstanding international academics and specialists, its objective is to offer contributions from different regions and to share multicultural perspectives on topics of interest related to spirituality and the pedagogy of Service-Learning in the world.

Each digital book is published in English, Spanish and French, and can be downloaded free of charge from the Uniservitate website: <https://www.uniservitate.org>.

THIS PUBLICATION

This publication collects the proceedings of the I Global Symposium *Uniservitate*, held on October 29th-30th, 2020, in virtual form. The texts respect the order of the presentations made during the two days of the symposium.

The “Spirituality and service-learning” section also includes two presentations developed within the framework of the *Uniservitate* Training for Trainers Course.

All the texts have been minimally edited to facilitate their reading. At the bottom of some of the presentations there is a link to the slides used in each case. In addition, a link to the video recording of each of the panels has been included at the end of each chapter. All the audiovisual material of the event is available in Spanish, English and French on the YouTube channel CLAYSS Digital: <https://www.youtube.com/user/clayssdigital/playlists>

6. SPIRITUALITY AND SERVICE-LEARNING



Mercy Pushpalatha

Since 2018 she has been working as a programme consultant for the United Board, South Asia programmes. She previously served as Principal and Secretary of Lady Doak College, Madurai, India. During her tenure as principal, Dr. Mercy and her colleagues introduced Life Frontier Engagement—a community-based action research and experiential learning initiative—into the curriculum for all third-year students. Prior to becoming principal, she was a member of the chemistry faculty at Lady Doak College for more than three decades.

Dr. Mercy received her MSc and MPhil in Chemistry from Madurai Kamaraj University and PhD from Alagappa University, Karaikudi. She is a peer team member in National Assessment and Accreditation Council and a member in the society of Lead Like Jesus, India. She is also a director of the Lady Doak College Foundation, Inc., USA, as a nominee from CUAC.

In the Higher Education Asian Network, the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia focuses on all our network colleges and universities' whole-person development. The definition of our whole-person development includes intellectual, ethical, and spiritual development. We know service-learning is a pedagogy that promotes all these three domains, and that is why our Higher Education Network, which covers Asian institutions and colleges, fosters service-learning to a more considerable extent in all our institutions. Service-learning helps us to offer integral education and promote whole-person development among the students.

What is spirituality? Being engaged in a dynamic process of inner reflection to better understand myself (Astin, et al., 2011b). The first aspect of spirituality is—precisely—understanding oneself to find the meaning and purpose of one's life. When this raises awareness, one can connect it with the other aspects of spirituality.

The second aspect of spirituality is connecting to a higher power. Some of us who believe in Jesus Christ says, "Jesus is Lord," and that connection helps us find meaning and purpose in our lives. Even those who do not believe in God say that there is some higher power. We believe service-learning helps to achieve that.

The third aspect of spirituality is the interconnectedness of humanity. When anyone knows the purpose and meaning of life, they get connected with others. They love and serve others as they want to be loved and served. Being interconnected with humanity, we get the desire to serve others.

Finally, spirituality is living one's philosophy of life. The philosophy gives direction and shows the meaning of life.

Through service-learning, each person learns to accept each other, work as a team, and work in a community. It is not that the student is on a higher pedestal, and the community is on a lower pedestal. The community becomes the co-learner; Students develop an attitude of giving and receiving from the community.

In service-learning there exist two kinds of outcomes: personal and professional. The professional outcome occurs when we take our academic learning to the community service and, on reflection of our experience in the community, we derive new knowledge of our subject discipline. The personal out-

come is nothing but our spiritual outcome. It gives us a greater sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth, and moral development; it leads to more significant interpersonal development, the ability to work with others, "one of the 21st-century skills."

Through service-learning, each person learns to accept each other, work as a team, and work in a community. It is not that the student is on a higher pedestal, and the community is on a lower pedestal. The community becomes the co-learner; Students develop an attitude of giving and receiving from the community. Hence, service-learning helps them connect with the community, work well with others, even if they are strangers, and build leadership and communication skills. Such an experience in the community develops spirituality in service-learning.

We prefer the term "spirituality" and not "religion" because, in the Asian context, there are many religious beliefs. The University of Minnesota gives the relationship between religion and spirituality². The two terms pose different types of questions. Spirituality asks for the meaning of life, how to connect with oneself and others, and how to live. Service-learning takes us through this journey of spirituality which inevitably entails a personal transformation. As we go through the service-learning process, we understand the meaning and purpose of

2 <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/what-spirituality>

our life, connect with ourselves and find out how to connect with others. Finally, we learn how to live as socially conscious people. The cultivation of spirituality takes place.



How can service-learning result in spiritual growth? The United Board and CLAYSS promote service-learning because this pedagogy cultivates spirituality, especially outside the classroom setting. In the diagram taken from Saint Paul University titled “A Transformative Leadership and Spirituality,” we see that combining critically reflective practice and social and spiritual engagement leads to Transformative Leadership. Reflection is an essential component of service-learning. Therefore, the professor engages the students through the process of reflection in service-learning. On reflection, the students become socially conscious, and they continue to get engaged in the community. It is not a linear engagement but rather a positive cycle that does not stop. That is the beauty of spirituality in service-learning. Once students go into the community, they keep reflecting, and they realize the purpose of life. This awareness pushes them to continue to engage with the community. Hence it results in a positive

That is the beauty of spirituality in service-learning. Once students go into the community, they keep reflecting, and they realize the purpose of life. This awareness pushes them to continue to engage with the community. Hence it results in a positive cycle.

cycle. That is why we believe that the spiritual component in service-learning transforms the student.

The Lady Doak College, India, offered service-learning as an integral part of the academic programme for more than a decade; the service-learning professors have witnessed how students get transformed during the reflective process. They look into themselves, and then they look into the community and get connected with it. Spirituality is precisely that inner transformation that is taking place.

The students of the Analytical Chemistry chair were engaged in the service-learning activity: they went in groups to the nearby residential areas, took water samples, analysed them and then interacted with the community. When the students did those tasks, they realized what the source of this natural resource is, the preciousness of water, that it is God-given and that, therefore, we need to be people of stewardship and accountability. After the course, the students used to come and share their impressions: “When we live in the dorms in the college, we close the taps so tightly because we know how precious every drop of water is.” No classroom had taught them this value. It was when they went to the community and interacted with it on the water analysis that the reflection process following that experience taught them this value. When they came back and used water, they learn how to be mindful of lessening water quality, such as the increase of alkalinity or the dissolved salt, the water components, or the acidity. The students understood the importance of this when they discovered how water properties seemed to affect their health conditions. They were able to see through this service-learning experience and the reflection process that they needed to be careful in water management and maintain water quality and, finally, how water quality seems to affect the community. They learned that they need to be mindful of the community’s needs and be accountable or service-oriented to the community. In this community engagement, the three components of spirituality are present: being connected to the higher path, connected to self, and connected to fellow human beings or the community. So that is how we take the students through a reflection process, thereby developing spirituality.

Another example of service-learning is a course on Business Management and Marketing engaged with a group of women from low socio-economic backgrounds that in India are called “women from self-help groups” (SHG). These women form groups and get involved in some business but they are not quite empowered, and therefore, they cannot develop any marketing strategy, so the students who had done their Marketing Theory paper engaged themselves with this socially deprived community by selling their handmade products: jam, pickles, sweaters, scarves, pillow cloths, and doormats. The women from SHG did not know how to market their products so the students of the Marketing course helped them.

How did the spiritual development happen in this community engagement? The students realised that everyone created by God has an inherent talent, and they appreciated God’s creative part. They used to think they were the only educated ones, but on going into the community, the students could see that they could not do what these SHG women were doing. Thus, they realised that there is something called higher power or, if they belong to a religion, God. If they believe in God, they realise God created these people in His image, and that is why they have this kind of creative ability in them. That is, they can appreciate that this creative ability is God-given. Before the experience, they thought these people were good for nothing since they do not have any education, cannot do anything, and cannot speak English properly. Now, developing an appreciation and respect for every human being irrespective of people’s

status, they can see these people's potential. Students realise their inadequacies, problems, and how they need to open up their eyes and see every human being as God's creation with some potential in that person. Hence, the students learned that they should treat every human being with dignity and respect. That is to say, their self-awareness was enhanced. Finally, the students can get inspiration to help the SHG women for effective marketing of their products: once they realise this, they share all the tips and all they have learned in the classroom on marketing, they can help the community, and thereby the community can sell all those products. This is another example of the three dimensions of spiritual development happening in the service-learning course: connecting with the higher power, God, connecting with the

To realise those spiritual components of a higher path, professors need to take their students through the reflection process path. That is the challenge for the professor or the educators. Only then will service-learning be able to achieve the outcome of spiritual development in the students.

self, and connecting with the community. We train the faculty members or the educators to ensure they can accompany and engage the students with the reflective process. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the professor.

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students through the reflection process path. That is the challenge for the professor or the educators. Only then will service-learning be able to achieve the outcome of spiritual development in the students.

As mentioned earlier, before the Service-Learning Marketing Theory course, the students were unable to appreciate those women's potential. The process changed their perspective. Thus, there is learning in these experiences and much unlearning and relearning—this less visible transformation is precisely the Spiritual Development that we see in the students.

Therefore, as educators, we must take students through the reflective process on these spiritual dimensions.

Links of interest and complementary contents:

https://publications.uniservitate.org/en/proceedings/mercy_pushpalatha.pdf

https://youtu.be/g29t_InFK8g



María Nieves Tapia

Director, CLAYSS, Latin American Center for Service-learning.

An approach to the spiritual dimension of service-learning

Conversation with Uniservitate trainers

We want to focus on the spiritual dimension of service-learning. Since this dimension has been studied on very few occasions and in very few places, it is one of the main focuses of *Uniservitate*. So, we are starting to think about it with our Academic Sounding Board and in the Spirituality and Research Team and we are starting now to discuss it with all the participants in the Programme.

I would like to start by remembering that in 2015, when the Pope gathered a huge Education Conference in Rome (CEC, 2015), the Congregation for Catholic Education did a global survey on the vision of Catholic Education, asking school principals, Catholic universities authorities, professors, people involved in Catholic institutions all around the world, about their vision on Catholic Education. The survey, reflected in the *Instrumentum Laboris* (CEC, 2014), presented two quite different images. From the standpoint of a minority group (25%), Catholic Education was seen as a fortress, the place where we defend the Catholic values against the barbarian forces of agnosticism, atheism, or even other religions, the

When we talk about spirituality, we have to depart from an idea of Catholic Higher Education that wants to provide an integral education involving heads, hands, and hearts for everybody, no matter if our students are Buddhists, Muslims or atheists.

place where we stand firm in our convictions and separate ourselves from those who do not believe in the same things that we believe in. Most of the participants (75%) in the survey had, instead, a vision of Catholic Education as a fountain, as a place where the

Word and the Love of God can reach every creature, as a source of life open for anyone interested in reaching it.

I would like to start by saying *Uniservitate* is firmly standing with the fountain image of Catholic Education. So, when we talk about spirituality, we have to depart from an idea of Catholic Higher Education that wants to provide an integral education involving heads, hands, and hearts for everybody, no matter if our students are Buddhists, Muslims or atheists.

Our idea of evangelisation is not imposing anything on anybody by force, we are not asking our students to go through an Inquisition court before entering university or during their studies. We want to build a community of witnesses, even if small, but able to offer experiences of the nearness of God for everybody.

We do not want to impose our beliefs on anybody, but we do certainly want to establish a coherent science-faith dialogue from our perspective because we are a Catholic institution and we have the right to present what we think, and to offer reflections and sounding academic studies on it.

We want to be witnesses of our faith as a University, being an institution “that goes forth,” going out to the existential peripheries, as Pope Francis exhorts the whole Church to do (EG, 1), to build a fraternal world (FT). Fraternity is a universal value, it is part of the core of humanistic anthropology since the Renaissance and even before. The very secular French revolution

started with fraternity, not only liberty and equality but also fraternity.

A Catholic Higher Education Institution trying to contribute to the spiritual growth of its members, should consider the wide spectrum of believes that we may find within the institution.

From our perspective, the human being is all about relationships: the horizontal relationships with our brothers

and sisters towards universal fraternity; the vertical relationships we establish as administrators of nature; and the vertical spiritual dimension, the relationship with God for those of us who believe and the search for a sense of life, for the spiritual dimension of mystery, for those who do not have a particular religion.

From this point of view, when we talk about the spiritual dimension of service-learning, I would say that spirituality involves different things for different people, and a Catholic Higher Education Institution trying to contribute to the spiritual growth of its members, should consider the wide spectrum of believes that we may find within the institution.

As we all know, even in countries with a strong Catholic tradition, a Catholic university normally offers a plural environment. In a very schematic way, of course, considering the spiritualities I would say it would be possible to recognize three main groups within the university:

1. Those who are atheists, agnostics, and those who have a personal religious conviction but do not practice it or consider themselves as part of a religious institution
2. Those who have a personal religious conviction and consider themselves as part of a religious community or institution (non-Christians).
3. Those who consider themselves Christians, including Catholics.

Espiritualidades dentro de una ICES

1. Questions about the sense of life, its spiritual, mystery dimension.
2. Personal connection with the transcendental dimension of life without an institutional religious affiliation: "the Unknown God."
3. "I believe but I do not practice": a personal relationship with God as presented by a particular religion, but without institutional affiliation or practice.
4. Personal religious relationship with Divinity as part of a religious creed/ institution/community.
5. Personal relationship with Jesus as part of a Christian Church.
6. Personal relationship with Jesus as part of the Catholic Church.

As shown in the table, within these three main categories we may identify six different ways to approach to spirituality:

1. For students and professors who do not believe in God or are agnostic, spirituality may involve questions about the sense of life, about this mystery dimension of life, those questions that science, logic and mathematics are not answering, and every honest and rigorous thinking person, at one point or other has to ask him or herself.
2. For some of them, it may be like the passage of Saint Paul in Athens when he speaks to the Greeks about the temple for the Unknown God (Acts, 17:22-

17:31): even people who do not have a particular God, may recognize—as the old Greek did—the presence of something transcendental, the kind of divinity or spiritual force they can have a personal connection with.

3. Others claim a personal relationship with God as presented by a particular religion, but without institutional affiliation or practice. We have heard hundreds of times our students saying: “I believe in Jesus but I do not want to know anything about the Church.” The same happens in any organized religious institution: we may find people raised in the Jewish or Muslim faith and traditions, who preserves a sense of identity and a personal relationship with divinity but have chosen not to practice all the rituals or have alienated themselves from the institutionalized community of the faithful.
4. Lastly, there are religious relationships with the divinity. Religion, as we all know, means exactly “establishing a relationship,” which may be at the same time a very personal, one and one bond established with God, and also finding His presence in the midst of a community. In our universities we meet people who recognise the need to contact God and establish a religious relationship within different religious communities. Depending on the contexts and the continents, a minority or a majority of the students and faculty may practice Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism, or belong to other religious communities.
5. As Christians, no matter our denomination, our personal relationship with God means a personal and community relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. At the same time, our differences and traditions have built over the centuries different spiritual perspectives, from the ancient Oriental spiritual traditions of the Orthodox Churches to the vast array of diverse Evangelical spiritual perspectives.
6. As Catholics, we live our faith and build our spirituality within the common tradition of the Catholic Church, following the teachings of the Pope and our bishops. In this context, many of our Catholic Universities identify themselves with a particular spiritual tradition or charism, like in the case of the Jesuits, the Franciscans, the Salesians and so many others. On a personal level, many of the members of our University community may bring their own personal faith experience, whether from a particular parish organisation or from a secular movement or charism.

In *Uniservitate*, at this point we are only beginning to ask ourselves what service-learning may contribute to build a personal and institutional spirituality, how to introduce the spiritual dimension in the reflection on service-learning practices, how to build a spirituality of service-learning open to the diversity of beliefs within our institutions, and at the same time, how service-learning can contribute to our particular Catholic institutional identity.

I do not intend to answer these central questions in the brief time of a presentation, but I would like to make a few suggestions to start the dialogue::

- ▶ *For those who do not have a religious belief*, service-learning can contribute to the reflection on the sense of life as a trajectory oriented by the values of solidarity, fraternity, social justice and the reflection on what it means to be a person oriented by a fraternal relationship with others. We can offer a very open and secular—but also a very spiritual—reflection on the meaning of fraternity and solidarity, on the difference between giving and sharing, between being paternalistic and being fraternal, between being a self-serving giver—because I want to “feel well”—and aiming to grow with authentic empathic and prosocial attitudes. Reflection and practice around these values can provide those students who are atheists or agnostic a very strong foundation for their life project, a foundation that is completely human and secular, and at the same time completely aligned with the values and identity of a Catholic University.
- ▶ *For those who have a religious conviction*, service-learning practice and reflection may be built through “the golden rule”: “Do to others what you would have them do to you.” Reciprocal love and service are common and central parts of most religions around the world. Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism and so many other religions have this golden rule, which is a common ground between every other religion and our Catholic spiritual perspectives. Learning and serving together should foster in our students multi-cultural, inter-religious reflections on their common goals, and at the same time discover or deepen on the specific richness and nuances that every particular religious tradition may offer.
- ▶ *As Christians*, we share the Gospel as a source to build a Christian spirituality for service-learning. I think from a spiritual point of view service-learning can help us all, no matter our different denominations, to go and meet Jesus in our brothers and sisters, to serve them but also to learn from them.
- ▶ From an ecumenical perspective, service-learning spirituality may be based in the core of our faith, in the “new commandment” (John 13: 33-35) of reciprocal love. Paraphrasing the words of Chiara Lubich, teaching our students to serve their brothers and sisters helps them to be prepared for the most important “final exam”:

If you were a student and by chance came to know the questions of the school’s final exams, you would consider yourself lucky and study the answers thoroughly.

Life is a trial and at the end it, too, has to pass an exam; but the infinite love of God has already told humanity what the questions will be: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink” (Mt. 25, 31-46). (Lubich, 1959).

Serving together provides the opportunity to build spirituality in a community dimension. When we build a community within the university that wants to serve our brothers and sisters and we are sincere and explicit about it, we may experience what Jesus says in the Gospel: “For where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them” (Mt., 18-20). Service-learning projects provide the possibility to build communities of service with Jesus in their midst, communities of service, learning and faith, where we are learning from Him among us, and His presence may be felt in the communities we are serving even if we are not bringing pamphlets or singing religious songs.

- ▶ In this sense, service-learning may be a way for evangelization, without falling in pushing proselytism. As Pope Paul VI used to say, the world needs more witnesses than preachers (EN, 41), and the testimony of concrete service and reciprocal fraternal love should make His presence shine.
- ▶ Finally, service-learning programmes may offer to *Catholic Higher Education* Institutions the possibility to strengthen their identity and mission in several aspects:
 - ▶ Presenting to all students the possibility to know and reflect on specific texts from the Social Doctrine of the Church, related to the issues addressed by their service-learning projects.
 - ▶ Connecting science and faith in the reflection on the bigger issues involved in social and environmental problems.
 - ▶ Reflecting on Church documents on the identity and social mission of a Catholic Higher Education institution.
 - ▶ Offering to all those interested the possibility of a spiritual reflection on service as a way to grow in their Catholic faith.

The contemporary Catholic Church reflection on the identity and mission of CHEIs offers multiple insights on service-learning. Just to quote a few that may help to reflect on a service-learning spirituality:

- ▶ A Children and young people... should be so trained to take their part in social life that properly instructed in the necessary and opportune skills they can become actively involved in various community organizations, open to discourse with others and willing to do their best to promote the common good. (GE, 1)

- ▶ Scientific and technological discoveries create an enormous economic and industrial growth, but they also inescapably require the correspondingly necessary search for meaning in order to guarantee that the new discoveries be used for the authentic good of individuals and of human society as a whole. If it is the responsibility of every University to search for such meaning, a Catholic University is called in a particular way to respond to this need: its Christian inspiration enables it to include the moral, spiritual and religious dimension in its research, and to evaluate the attainments of science and technology in the perspective of the totality of the human person. (EE, 7)
- ▶ The Christian spirit of service to others for the promotion of social justice is of particular importance for each Catholic University, to be shared by its [professors] and developed in its students. The Church is firmly committed to the integral growth of all men and women. (EE, 34)
- ▶ The university was a place of formation in solidarity. The word solidarity does not belong solely to a Christian vocabulary. It is a word that is fundamental to human vocabulary. As I said today it is a word which in the present crisis, risks being eliminated from the dictionary. The discernment of reality, by taking on the moment of crisis, and the promotion of a culture of encounter and dialogue, orientate us to solidarity as a fundamental element for a renewal of our societies. ... There is no future for any country, for any society, for our world, unless we are able to show greater solidarity. Solidarity, then, as a way of making history, as a vital context in which conflicts, tensions, and even those who oppose one another attain a harmony that generates life. (Pope Francis, 2013)
- ▶ You know, dear young university students, that we cannot live without facing challenges, without responding to challenges. Whoever does not face challenges, whoever does not take up challenges, is not living. Your willingness and your abilities, combined with the power of the Holy Spirit who abides in each of us from the day of Baptism, allow you to be more than mere spectators, they allow you to be protagonists in contemporary events. Please do not watch life go by from the balcony! Mingle where the challenges are calling you to help carry life and development forward, in the struggle over human dignity, in the fight against poverty, in the battle for values and in the many battles we encounter each day. (Pope Francis, 2013b)
- ▶ The Synod recognized that “albeit in a different way from earlier generations, social engagement is a specific feature of today’s young people. Alongside some who are indifferent, there are many others who are ready to commit themselves to initiatives of voluntary service, active citizenship and social solidarity. They need to be accompanied and encouraged to use their talents and skills creatively, and to be encouraged to take up their responsibilities. Social engagement and direct

contact with the poor remain fundamental ways of finding or deepening one's faith and the discernment of one's vocation... It was also noted that the young are prepared to enter political life so as to build the common good" (CV, 170).

- ▶ My question to you, as educators, is this: Do you watch over your students, helping them to develop a critical sense, an open mind capable of caring for today's world? A spirit capable of seeking new answers to the varied challenges that society sets before humanity today? Are you able to encourage them not to disregard the world around them, what is happening all over? Can you encourage them to do that? To make that possible, you need to take them outside the university lecture hall; their minds need to leave the classroom, their hearts must go out of the classroom. Does our life, with its uncertainties, its mysteries and its questions, find a place in the university curriculum or different academic activities? (Pope Francis, 2015)
- ▶ Present-day culture demands new forms that are more inclusive of all those who make up social and hence educational realities. We see, then, the importance of broadening the concept of the educating community. The challenge for the community is to not isolate itself from modes of knowledge, or, for that matter, to develop a body of knowledge with minimal concern about those for whom it is intended. It is vital that the acquisition of knowledge leads to an interplay between the university classroom and the wisdom of the peoples who make up this richly blessed land. Knowledge must always sense that it is at the service of life, and must confront it directly in order to keep progressing. Hence, the educational community cannot be reduced to classrooms and libraries but must progress continually towards participation. This dialogue can only take place on the basis of an episteme capable of "thinking in the plural," that is, conscious of the interdisciplinary and interdependent nature of learning. (Pope Francis, 2018)
- ▶ 'The option for those who are least, those whom society discards' (EG, 195) is a priority that Christ's followers are called to pursue, so as not to impugn the Church's credibility but to give real hope to many of our vulnerable brothers and sisters. Christian charity finds concrete expression in them, for by their compassion and their willingness to share the love of Christ with those in need, they are themselves strengthened and confirm the preaching of the Gospel. (Pope Francis, 2019, 7)

In conclusion, a service-learning experience may be for all our students an occasion to establish a personal relationship with God as Love, a Love that has been given and also given back.

These are just a few points to start reflecting and we will be having more time to do so through the programme later on.

I would like to end going back to reflect on the “final exam.” As the Pope says in *Fratelli tutti*, we will be surprised on the last day to see who will be at the right of the Lord, “When the last day comes, and there is sufficient light to see things as they really are” (281).

In the light of the love of God, we will not be asked how many diplomas we got, how many Church documents we read or wrote, or how many religious ceremonies we attend-

So, if we provide opportunities for our students to do service-learning, to learn how to fraternally serve their brothers and sisters, no matter their beliefs or if they hold grudges against the Catholic Church, in the last day they will be able to meet Jesus and have the right answers for the most important exam of all.

ed. He will be asking all of us how much we have loved our brothers and sisters “with deeds and in truth” (1 John, 3:18).

So, if we provide opportunities for our students to do service-learning, to learn how to fraternally serve their brothers and sisters, no matter their beliefs or if they hold

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Uniservitate is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning in Catholic Higher Education. It aims to generate a systemic change in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs), through the institutionalisation of service-learning (SL) as a tool to achieve its mission of an integral education and formation of agents of change committed to their community.

“Only by changing education can we change the world”

Pope Francis

1 I Global Symposium UNISERVITATE

This first volume of the Uniservitate Collection is dedicated to the I Global Symposium Uniservitate, whose objective was to initiate a series of meetings within the framework of the Uniservitate programme, as a multicultural, global and plural space, based on the contributions of the pedagogical proposal of service-learning to integral university education. The event, held in October 2020, sought to facilitate the exchange between experts, authorities and professors from Higher Education Institutions from diverse cultural contexts around the world, on university community engagement and service-learning practices and programmes. The present Proceedings are a compilation of the reflections and experiences shared there.

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