

SYNTHESIS

**A THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK BASED ON
OIKOS AND ITS PASTORAL
IMPLICATIONS**

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The crystal-clear context of our discussion is the intensifying ecological crisis in our local communities - a crisis inextricably linked with the global degradation of our environment and resources. This has been the unmistakable message behind each presentation in our conference, and it is within this context that I offer the following considerations as a student of Theology.

After hearing the different papers delivered as well as the discussions arising from them these past two days, I am put in the situation of a fisherman on a small boat facing a sea teeming with fish of every kind. Like him, I simply intend to cast my net with the hope that I address the more interesting and significant points in the proceedings.

Allow me first to describe the nature of my remarks negatively. My remarks will not directly concern particular views of the many tribal communities represented nor the theological reactions to these views. Besides considerations of time, the consistent quality of the discussions following each presentation does not call for such an approach.

My comments are also not a discussion of specific theological issues raised by these views: for instance, the presence of multiple gods and goddesses in the different myths, stories, and rituals or the theological distinction between primary and secondary creation.

Neither will they be theological readings of the many-layered tribal texts from a particular perspective, say deconstructionist or

feminist. While these would have been very instructive, what is perhaps most needed at this juncture is more basic.

Thus what I propose to offer is a broad theological framework within which particular views of the tribal communities, specific theological issues, and various perspectives can be located and discussed. I can do no more than sketch such a framework, but I hope that even the sketch will suffice to generate further theological reflection and pastoral action. This broad framework is an attempt to relate the integrity of the traditional *oikos* with the Christian understanding of creation.

The Integrity of the Oikos

First used in its French form by E.H. Haeckel in the 1870s, the word ecology is derived from *oikos*, the Greek root meaning "house". Economics, the apparent lord of the social sciences today, also belongs to this ancient lineage, although its original meaning as "the management of the house" has been lost under the weight of modern statistics and projections.

The first of three major points I wish to indicate in this first section concerns what may be referred to as the integrity of the *oikos*. While the term literally means a dwelling-place, its connotation includes all the elements that make a particular location worthy of habitation, and therefore, whole. An *oikos* then is what one identifies as "our place" — the identification encompassing both the physical location and all its ordered elements, and expressing the speaker's sense of identity and security in it.

Without exception, our discussions of the different tribal communities pointed to the wholeness of their traditional *oikos*. The characteristic order of their place is narrated their myths, rituals, and other forms of literature: in fact, one may consider the narrative order in these forms as reflective of the primordial order they see in their *oikos*.

Secondly, the integrity of the *oikos* is specified primarily in terms of their harmonious relationship to the natural elements — material and spiritual — within the *oikos*. This relationship is not

a passive resignation to these elements, but includes the sophisticated technology with which the different tribal groups work with, not against nature. It also, covers the various ways through which they relate to the benevolent or malevolent spirits in their communal existence. Harmony then is not simply a given but also a task in the traditional *oikos*.

Thirdly, nowhere is the necessary effort to achieve harmony more apparent than in the management of conflict. Each tribal group has processes, usually of a ritual nature, for the smooth functioning of social relationships. The traditional *oikos* then is not an idealized situation where conflicts do not arise, but rather where they are minimized or solved in ways common to and accepted by all.

The Coming of "The Other"

This integrity of the tribal *oikos* remains until that which is not part of it, i.e. "the other", appears. With this appearance comes the possibility of disturbance or at least the occasion for a new integration. This is reflected in the different kinds of intrusion into the tribal communities that preceding speakers have chronicled in great detail.

The first intrusion would be the presence of other tribes, especially if their respective places are in close proximity. As reported in the different narratives discussed, they either learn to live with each other or to manage conflict if it arises. In case negotiations break down, there could be full-scale tribal war, and the victory of one party and the resulting peace pact resolve the conflict.

The second and, by far, the greater intrusion into the traditional tribal *oikos* is the arrival of other groups with a different way of life, particularly lowland and "Christian" culture. This social phenomenon has been the singular cause for the massive disintegration of the traditional *oikos* and accompanying displacement of tribal communities in the Philippines. Waves of lowlanders have come into their habitat and destroyed its integrity — even with the best of intentions. This is, at the very least, due to the

differences between cultures, compounded by ignorance and prejudice.

Related to the preceding, the third intrusion may be described in terms of modern science and technology, and a monetary and market economy. Here one is not talking about the over-all complex systems in the metropolis and their impact on the personal and social existence of tribal communities. The simple presence of any modern appliance — be it a radio or a refrigerator — invariably opens the door to change in the traditional *oikos*. Tribals hear about what is happening in the city or realize that food could be kept longer. The use of money and the mechanisms of the market subvert the usual barter system that characterizes tribal economy. Wealth in the form of money can now be carried around conveniently and used in a variety of ways.

The fourth intrusion is political in nature, and may be related to the current state of Philippine political life. The Philippine Government at its national and local levels impinges on the traditional *oikos* of tribal communities. This may take the form of the scarce social services that barely reach the tribes or the legal requirement to register ancestral lands. But most important political concern deals with the integration of tribal Filipinos into the State without loss of their holistic way of life.

As specified by the four intrusions mentioned above, the coming of "the Other" has disrupted, to a great extent, the integrity of the traditional *oikos* in the tribal communities. Each of the reports we heard during our conference confirms this, and it becomes ironic that the disorder that we find in reality appears to be the underside of the order expressed in the tribal myths and narratives.

Relation Between the Integrity of Oikos and the Judeo-Christian Understanding of Creation

The disintegration of the traditional tribal way of life as a result of the intrusion of "the Other" raises the basic question regarding the scope and foundation of one's *oikos*. The question is not about a choice between tradition and modernity, nor the possibility of

expanding boundaries beyond the little forest clearing or *sitio*, but rather what makes any place "our place". For us, as Christians, the foundational answer to this can only come in the Judeo-Christian understanding of creation.

This view of creation may be described in terms of its two foci — God as the absolute origin of existence, and Christ as the Lord of all creation. The first stresses that all beings owe their entire existence to God. What it means is perhaps best expressed in Brueggemann's commentary on the Genesis:

Rather, we insist that the text is a proclamation of God's decisive dealing with his creation. The word "creation" is controlling for such a view. The whole cluster of words — creator/creation/create/creature — are confessional words freighted with peculiar meaning. Terms such as "cosmos" and "nature" should never be carelessly used as equivalents, for these words do not touch the theocentric, covenantal relational affirmation being made.

The word "creation" belongs inevitably with its counter word "creator." The grammar of these chapters presumes that there is a Subject (creator), a transitive verb (create) and an object (creature/creation). The single sentence, "Creator creates creation," asserts that God does something and continuous to care about what he does... The subject of the sentence, then, is never separated from the object; and the object is surely never separated from the subject. Finally, the verb that links them is irreversible. While it may be used synonymously with "make" or "form," the verb is in fact without analogy. It refers first to the special action of God and to the special relation which binds these two parties together. Creator creates creation. Subject, verb, object.¹

The core of the Judeo-Christian understanding of creation then lies in the proclamation that all that is, is creation by God. This is the radical foundation of the integrity of all of creation; this is what makes all of creation and any place in it truly *oikos*, "our place."

¹ *Genesis*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), pp. 16-17

The second focus in the Christian view of creation highlights the role of Christ in creation. This role is described in Scripture — by Paul as being “the first-born of all creatures, in [whom] everything in heaven and on earth was created” (Col 1, 15-16), and by John in terms of being “present to God in the beginning, through him all things came to being and apart from him nothing came to be” (Jn 1, 2-4). This Christocentric emphasis preserves the integral connection between creation and redemption, between the work of the Father and the Son, which has been characteristic of Christian teaching.

These two foci — the absolute origin of all in God, and the Lordship of Christ over creation — constitute the Christian view of creation. This view provides the most radical foundation for the integrity of all of creation, and challenges both the tribal communities and the others who have intruded on them. To these others, the Christian view of creation mandates profound respect for the tribals’ dignity as equal creatures of God, and for their *oikos* as a place of God’s creation. To the tribals, it grounds the validity of the integrity of their *oikos* and at the same time, opens it to new integration with others. Seen from this perspective, the Christian Faith enjoins all to confront the limits we have placed on our own places, and the extent to which we have put barriers on what is integrally whole as God’s creation.

However, Christian history is full of instances in which either focus has been isolated from or emphasized over the other. For example, and this is the more common instance, the role of Christ in God’s revelation has been isolated from creation so as to diminish the relative value and integrity of all as God’s creation. Such a distortion has unfortunately led, by way of a reaction, to the extreme forms of the so-called “creation theology/spirituality”.

A related form of this distortion in Christian history is the dualistic mentality that has been mentioned as a major obstacle towards a more ecological consciousness within the churches. In its starkest form, this dualistic mentality holds that matter is evil, and consequently eschews any serious involvement with the world. It even uses traditional church formulations such as *creatio ex nihilo* to defend its position. And yet when we return to the sources and their historical context, we see plainly that such formulations

were used to condemn Manichean dualism. The statement that “God created out of nothing” referred to God’s sovereign power in creating, i.e. God needed no thing, much less what the dualists considered as sinful fallen material nature.

Here I am reminded of the earlier comment about how bad theology produces bad science which in turn produces bad economics. If we forget the two foci of the Christian understanding of creation, which is the fundamental basis of the integrity of our *oikos*, we end up with the kind of science and economics which sees the material and the quantifiable as entirely self-enclosed. This explains perhaps why modern economics has become a far cry from “the management of the household”.

Areas for Further Theological Reflection

Within the above theological framework based on the relation between the integrity of the *oikos* and Christian view of creation, there are areas requiring further theological reflection. I will simply mention four crucial ones.

The first deals with the why and wherefore of creation, its eschatological reference. If we examine creation stories and myths, we see that they arise out of our human historical experience, and what we see impels us — consciously or unconsciously, explicitly or implicitly — to ask where all reality **came from**. But this question also implies where all reality is going to. So the question about origin of creation and that about the future of the human condition are not separate. The perspective for understanding creation then must also include what all creation is moving towards.

Let me quote from Moltmann to illustrate how he sees the eschatological fulfillment of creation:

‘Heaven’ is the word used to describe the sphere of God’s creative potentialities and energies. ‘The earth’ is the term we use for the sphere of created reality and the possibilities inherent in that reality. By distinguishing between the quality of the creative potentialities of God towards the

world, and the quality of the world's own potentialities, we are also distinguishing between the world's historical and its eschatological future. But the distinction also leads to an understanding of the continual communication between God's creative potentialities towards the world, and the worldly potentialities themselves, for the worldly potentialities are made possible by divine ones. The continual making-possibilities-possible keeps the world in existence and all its life systems alive, for it keeps the future open for all open systems, and opens that future anew. To put it in theological terms, creation lives from the continual inflow of the energies of the Spirit of God. To put it symbolically: because heaven is open, and as long as it is open, the world has a future.²

Applied in the context of our discussions, what we need to reflect on is our goal in working for and towards the integrity of our common *oikos*: Are our efforts based on preservation of an integrity already inherent in our total environment or are they directed towards shaping new harmony in an increasing complex reality?

The second theological issue is Christological: How do we understand Christ? The role of Christ in creation is, as I said, one of the foci in the Christian understanding of creation. What needs to be developed is an understanding of Christ that is both historical and cosmic. This means that we do not do away with the historical life of Jesus of Nazareth — the person who became human, was crucified, and was raised by the Father — and transform Christ into some mythical figure. At the same time, we need to relate this to the Christ who is present among us now and whose Spirit permeates to entire cosmos. Perhaps what some theologians call "Spirit Christology" is a step toward this integrated picture of the historical and the cosmic Christ. How we face this carries concrete implications on how we deal with traditional religious elements in the tribal *oikos*.

The third issue lies in the interface between theology and culture — the relativity of our cultural grasp of creation. When we

² *God in Creation*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), pp. 182-830.

speak of creation, we use words like "nature" and "*kalikasan*". These words come from our cultural experience, and their meanings derive from their relations to other words such as "culture" or "*kalinangan*". We find the same thing at work in the biblical texts. But as Bruggemann pointed out, the theological proclamation behind these words is the truth about God as the absolute origin of reality, no matter what name we designate to refer to all that is.

Related to this is what has been mentioned earlier, the radical incompleteness of all our thoughts and our institutions, including the churches, when face-to-face with the reality of God. We must always be careful not to absolutize the words we use. It is only God who is absolute, who reveals God's self, and who is the origin and sustenance of all that is, which may call "nature" or "environment" or by some other word. A fuller theology of creation needs to spell out the dynamics between this theological truth and particular cultural mediations of it.

The fourth theological area to be addressed is theological anthropology, which raises the question of evil in the world and the consequent role of human responsibility and stewardship. Is evil, as many of the tribal myths and stories seem to suggest, an external force which can be dealt with through rites of purification? Or is evil rooted in the human heart? We would not be able to come up with an integral theology of creation if it does not face the reality of evil which is, to a large part, the cause of ecological destruction.

Pastoral Implications

In this final section, I suggest some practical, pastoral implications of the relation between the integrity of the tribal *oikos* and the Christian view of creation. These are points for action that the churches can engage in.

The first pastoral implication lies in how much Christians can learn from the tribals' deep sense of the functional integrity of the traditional *oikos*, and how they can rediscover this sense within their own tradition. Seeing the tribal way of living in harmony

with nature and among themselves confronts Christians who have lost this harmony in their lifestyle and behavior.

Another lesson they can learn, and this is the second pastoral implication, concerns the meaning and value of the practical technology and wisdom. Many of the presentations show that the tribals have accumulated through countless generations sophisticated knowledge and know-how about their environment; for instance, their different tools for catching different forms of marine life. Unfortunately, modern science has not taken very seriously the scientific and technological contribution of the tribals, and yet these traditional communities have a first-hand knowledge of their environment which sometimes even the instruments of modern science miss or take long to discover. Moreover, technology in the tribal setting is always focused on its usefulness for the community; hence the meaning of technology is never for its own sake.

What I emphasize here is not the either/or choice between tribal and modern technologies but the functional cooperation between them towards a more humane way of life for all. To cite simply one example, the treasury of herbal medication known to the tribals is something that must be included in local health care programs.

The third pastoral implication deals with the use of basic church communities for the care for the environment. Experience has shown that the environment can best be cared for by communities rather than individuals or agencies. Here the current pastoral strategy of the churches to form basic communities can provide the vehicle for the protection and development of the environment.

Partnership for the Oikos

In the preceding sections, I have mentioned both the pastoral implications for action, and the areas for further reflection needed to en flesh our theological framework based on *oikos*. But such pastoral intervention and theological reflection are possible only through partnership. Allow me then to conclude with a profound story on partnership from the children's book, *Does God Have a Big Toe?*

Before there was anything, there was God, a few angels, and a huge swirling glob of rocks and water with no place to go. The angels asked God, "Why don't you clean up this mess?"

So God collected rocks from the huge swirling glob and put them together in clumps and said, "Some of these clumps of rocks will be planets, and some will be stars, and some of these rocks will be...just rocks."

Then God collected water from the huge swirling glob and put it together in pools of water and said, "Some of these pools of water will be oceans, and some will be clouds, and some of this water will be... just water."

Then the angels said, "Well, God, it's neater now, but is it finished?" And God answered:

"NOPE".

On some of the rocks God placed growing things, and creeping things, and things only god knows what there are, and when God had done all this, the angels asked God. "Is the world finished now?" And God answered:

"NOPE!"

God made a man and woman from some of the water and dust and said to them, "I am tired now. Please finish up the world for me...really it's almost done." But the man and woman said, "We can't finish the world alone! You have the plans and we are too little."

"You are big enough," God answered them. "But I agree to this. If you keep trying to finish the world, I will be your partner."

The man and woman asked, "What's a partner?" and God answered, "A partner is someone you work with on a big thing that neither of you can do alone. If you have a partner, it means that you can never give up, because your

partner is depending on you. On the days you think I am not doing enough and on the days I think you are not doing enough, even on those days we are still partners and we must not stop trying to finish the world. That's the deal." And they all agreed to that deal.

Then the angels asked God, "Is the world finished yet?" and God answered, "I don't know. Go ask my partners."

Discussion

Comment

I liked your discussion of the two foci of the Christian view of creation. The one in particular I am interested in is the first one — God as the absolute origin of all creation. You talked about the subject-verb-object kind of relationship. I thought that was unique. I am puzzled about it though, in the sense that one element in creation [the human] becomes the subject towards the rest of creation. There seems to be that distancing and separating where your emphasis is towards bringing them together.

Response

This is precisely the question of the human role within creation. Yes, the human is, to use biblical images, "created in the image and likeness of God," and therefore enjoys freedom. But that freedom is never absolute. If we proceed to the second creation story up to the eleventh chapter of Genesis, we find this to be the case. So it still holds that God is the absolute foundation, as the one who creates creation. The human participates in that creation but only in a relative manner. That participation can lead and, in fact, has led to evil. Whether this evil is entirely the human's responsibility is another question.

Comment

When you have one element of creation given the privileged status of being subject to the rest of creation, even within limits, it is not long before those limits are taken away. The subject relationship continues, and even replaces our guiding principles, our teleology, and becomes our consumer background.

Comment

Some thoughts come to mind while you were talking about biblical and non-biblical revelation. If you look at our main subject matter as presenters of social science data and not theology, we are all essentially looking back to the past. Consciously or unconsciously, our assumption is that revelation outside the Bible in the country is present in the tribal communities before they were exposed to Christianity and other cultures that came along with it. There is an implicit rejection of the validity of the past reflections and hermeneutics of the colonials. This is now our third conference, and others still talk about aboriginals and their presumably pre-colonial consciousness, although we have been gathering data within the recent period. Our conscious efforts are to be describers of social phenomena, presenting authentic data not mixed with recent cultural change.

I understand non-biblical revelation to refer to both the primitive original experience of our ethnic communities as well as the continuing reflection of our people. Today we are confronted with the human condition, and people write their reflections in literature, poetry, novels, stories.

One time I mentioned to a theologian that I was willing to work on the theology of literature. He raised his eyebrows and said, "What? What about that?" I do not know what he meant by that, but I think he was trying to tell me, "You really think you can get into that?"

But on the other hand, who are the Jeremiahs, Amoses and Isaiahs? What are they saying? Are they not talking today in the form of literature, reflecting on the experience of the very complex

life, not only about the environment, consumerism but about people dealing with other people, about society, about all the problems we have?

I am not saying that this is the direction we are moving into, but I think in the future there might be room for reflecting on what exactly God revealed not only before the coming of the missionaries, but what God continues to reveal to our people as he deals with them in his providence and in the historical condition of our time.

I am reacting to the sessions and the whole conference and the series of conferences, thinking of what other directions we might be going into such as the revelation in our literature. I am not talking about the possibility of some sacred canon (not the way you would describe canon). It is not prize-winning literature. When we judge literature in the Palanca contest or others, we are judging form according to its aesthetics.

How do you, theologians, feel if you are exposed to the novels, poems, plays that have been written since the coming of Christianity some of which are critical even Christianity? Is God talking through them?

Response

Yes, I agree with you completely, I find that the whole presupposition of all our seminars on biblical and non-biblical revelation is precisely that God reveals Godself not only through Scripture but in other ways. When you raised the question about the value of the literature of a people, you are asking a biased person. I use literature not only as a starting point but as an important ingredient in my theological work.

But I agree with you that as a group, we should perhaps face the issue of the relationship between biblical and non-biblical revelation. For example, how non-biblical revelation is related to the unique place of Jesus Christ in the history in the understanding of Christianity. That is an important theological issue, but I am not sure what is the best way for our group to discuss it. I feel that

people are coming at that relationship from different ways and angles.

Comment

There are two questions here — the first is where our focus and interests will be, and the second is about the scientific and technological interest, what will enable the foremost is what would make the dialogue continue, while respecting the different disciplines, so that the dialogue itself is revelatory.

I recognize what as a theologian, you would suggest — talking about God creating creation. And theologians can sit down and talk together. But social scientists will ask where do we come in. If we are to dialogue with each other and the theme of revelation would come in, perhaps the model, the paradigm of communication is useful. If we say that God reveals himself, he communicates himself. In media, there is the subject, the channel, the recipient, the message and the purpose. This model can be used in theology.

Response

Let me respond to it first, theologically and second, practically. The theological point that I was trying to make through that quotation from Brueggemann is that the act of creation is *sui generis*, unique like no other. The second point is practical. We have in the paper of Rev. Delbert Rice a good example of how a theologian and a scientist can be one and the same person. And I can imagine Rev. Rice the theologian and Rev. Right the social scientist talking to each other, and in the end being one and the same person. It is not impossible to put the two together.

Comment

Let me talk about the model from media and its elements — the sender, the medium, the receiver, the message, and the purpose. I see a problem here. In the beginning, we talked about the

sacramentality of the world. The world is a message in a Hopkinsian way, saying something.

It is like a television image of a man on horseback smoking a cigarette. What is visible is the burly man on a healthy horse and the cigarette. That is what we receive, but is it the message? The message is "buy this brand of cigarette". So there is the possibility of misreading because the image that strikes us and its address to the perception are not identical to the action expected in the message. If we are to use the communication paradigm, the action expected is to get to the store and buy a cigarette, but the message is the healthy man smoking while on horseback.

If we are to read the environment, the contents of the *oikos*, how will we agree with one another? We are going to read those signs very differently, as I think this was what was beginning to show in our reaction to the scientific synthesis. The President of the Philippines along with the nation wants a newly-industrialized country, an NIC, in the year 2000 or earlier, if possible. That is how he reads it. But we are going to tell him, you better stop encouraging too much consumption. This is how we are beginning to read. And these two readings of the same nature, the same environment, are at loggerheads. That is a problem for conferences like this. And when we return to our places, we meet the same problem of conflicting readings. There does not seem to be a way out.

Response

One last point regarding Dr. Hornedo's comments. The escape out of that seemingly closed situation is the reality that we experience God in our lives, and this is the measure of our readings. You can call this the mystical dimension, and it is not a mediated reality, but the reality of a personal relationship with God that we experience in our hearts, in prayer, as we adore and praise God. That breaks the cycle.

Comment

There may not be double talk if the same person speaks not only from his own standpoint but from the standpoint of the others. The human can, while looking from his own perspective, try to understand and interpret the other. There is mirroring. Christ remained the image of God. We call him the Mediator, despite the fact that we say he is also the Son of God.

We believe in the Spirit. But the function of the Spirit is to take what belongs to one and show to it to the other. And this is the way the Holy Spirit builds community around Christ. He gathers us unto Christ and in doing so, takes what belongs to Christ and shows it to us. He builds the church and yet breaks the church. This is the dual function of the Spirit — to gather in Christ, and to take what belongs to one and give it to the other. This is what is happening in the dialogue. I think the Holy Spirit is working here.

But what does it mean to be a steward? What is being entrusted?

A striking image of an apostolate being passed on to another for stewardship is the Resurrection scene of our Lord with Peter. Peter betrayed Jesus not once, but three times, and Jesus now, risen from the dead and about to return to the Father asks Peter three times: "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?" Each time Peter strongly protests: "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." And each time Jesus simply says in reply: "Feed my sheep".

On the eve of his departure from this earth, having entrusted Peter with his work, Jesus gives him a very simple straightforward mandate: "Feed my sheep".

What, then, is the apostolate that is being handed on? In reference to the Ateneo de Davao University, the apostolate is certainly not the buildings, or the land, or the finances that a trust department in a bank can probably administer more profitably. It is certainly not the cycle of school operations of faculty recruitment, program development, class scheduling, instruction, grading, and recording that any efficient training manager can successfully run.

"Feed my sheep." The apostolate that is being entrusted is not some abstract "work" or impersonal task. What is being entrusted is a community, composed of individual persons, brought together by a common longing, bound by common meaning, and living by a set of common values. And the task of stewardship is the task of nourishing this community, of clarifying and articulating this bond of common meaning, of strengthening this set of common values through caring for the individual persons in this community.

Put in this way, how far removed all this may seem from the pronouncements of standard textbooks on how to manage a school! And yet, when you think about it, can it be otherwise?

Let us just take, as a test case, an obvious concern of the university enterprise, the foundation of the students.

Ideally, what kind of graduate are we trying to produce in this apostolate of a Jesuit school? We strive to produce a graduate with a keen questioning mind, a master of what it knows, yet humbly aware that what it knows falls far short of what remains to be known and mastered; a graduate with the affective maturity for whom the self is neither a stranger, nor the blind source of fears and biases and prejudices; a graduate with a mature sense of responsibility for one's self, for one's brethren, for one's community; a graduate whose choices and actions spring from an inner core of values that derive from the example of the person of Jesus Christ, with a holy anger before the brazenness of injustice and an effective sense of compassion before the scandal of poverty.

Such total human development, such thorough personal integration remains for the most part an ideal to be attained, for even any significant realization of this ideal is a lifetime personal achievement. Moreover the antecedents of such a development must be traced back to the home, and its full flowering can only be found in culture that, in the end, describes the Body of Christ. And no doubt, like the parable of the sower, the seeds that are sown in our school in pursuit of such development will not always fall on fertile ground.

But, despite all this, if the Ateneo de Davao, as an apostolate of the Society of Jesus, means anything, it means that to study in this school is a favored period in the lives of our students where the seeds of these ideals, of what it means to be fully and authentically human, are consciously planted and painstakingly nourished, and where, according to the times and seasons ordained by God, what is sown does bear fruit a hundredfold in the lives of our graduates.

The crucial question then emerges: How is such an educational formation to be attained?

I would like to suggest that such an educational formation is attained not primarily by lectures or programs of studies, important as these may be, for lectures and studies give understanding, and understanding something is not the same as living what is understood. Neither is it attained by pious practices alone, for pious practices can assist and perfect, but cannot supplant the

total human development and integration that is desired. Rather, this authentic, integral, and total human formation blossoms under the conditions of a heart that loves: a heart that loves the truth — not merely in mathematics or literature, but the truth in one's relationship with others, the truth in relationship with one's self; a heart that loves justice — not merely what is fair in grading, but what is fair in life, seeing how we are all children of God, yet how so many cannot partake of God's lavish gifts in this world; a heart that loves — not merely himself or his own, but his neighbor, his people, and his God.

Given such a heart that loves, the seemingly all-important goal of university, namely that of academic excellence, becomes but one of the many attainments of a successful educational effort. In fact, academic excellence becomes ranged with such other even more valuable human attainments as a gentle, open, and generous heart, a peaceful life, an indomitable, ever hopeful, ever joyful spirit.

The priority of love over intellect is a precious heritage in the traditional Christian understanding of the human person. It was a distinctive character of the early schools and universities of the Society of Jesus, where there was a conviction that moral excellence was the ultimate goal of Jesuit education, and where there prevailed the belief that the vital importance of scholarly excellence was in function of achieving moral excellence.

Unfortunately this heritage has been buried deep by the pretentious spirit of rationalism that continues to hold sway — a pernicious foreign influence of which our own universities and educators in the country are still to become critically aware.

But in our own day, seeing the bitter fruits of intelligence detached from love — think of the sophisticated weapons of human destruction, the high-tech devastation of our natural resources, the cleverness that we often enough see in lawyers, or politicians, or businessmen, or mediemen who can make wrong right, and black white — is it not time to seriously evaluate our assumptions in the task called education?

As an aside, ours has been called a "damaged culture" and seeing our chronic self-destructive tendencies, many are inclined to agree. But I would like to suggest that if our culture is damaged, then the damage is a consequence of our uncritically absorbing what is foreign and inimical to what truly makes us to be what we are as a people. For deep down in what constitutes us as a people are such qualities as a desire for harmony and peace, an affinity for song and laughter, a deep far-ranging capacity for love and caring — for our young, for our elders, for our families (that continually extend), for our town, our province, our country — for life itself. Far from having a damaged culture, we possess as a people a profoundly blest culture that, for a brief shining moment in 1986, in the peaceful revolution, showed its depth and its richness, its all-embracing range and power.

If there is a measure of truth in what I say, how do we begin to instill in our students that love that can transform their lives and the lives of those around them?

In this process, the role of the personnel of the University, particularly of the faculty, is of pivotal importance. For love is not without a face: love issues from a person who loves. Neither can love be forced, it can only be evoked, for love is born in a heart that feels itself loved. In short, if our students will learn to love, they must first feel loved; and if they will learn to expand that love to embrace the whole range of their lives, then they must see in the lives they encounter in the university, that love for truth, that love for justice, that love for neighbor and country and God that they can emulate and respond to. Hence, the key role of the faculty.

Without love, no amount of memos or instructions will ever be enough to induce a teacher to make that extra effort to help a student understand. With love, no memo or urging is needed.

From all this, the direction of my Presidency finds its bearings. There are two fundamental directions that I hope to pursue as President of the University.

The first is internal, directed to within the University.

As President I will take that simple all-embracing mandate seriously : "Feed my sheep." While this mandate embraces the whole University community, the faculty, because of its pivotal role, merits a special focus of attention. Somehow, a deep trust must develop whereby any faculty engaged in the work of the University will feel that he or she is valued; that his or her welfare is of great importance to the school, that his or her growth or her welfare is of great importance to the school, that his or her growth, both professionally and humanly, is an earnest concern of the school. It is only upon the cornerstone of such trust that together we can build the even more challenging structure of an apostolic community, that will require the continual communal articulation of common meaning and common values that make us to be the Ateneo de Davao University.

The second, parallel direction is external, and directed outside the University.

Just as on a personal level, love reaches out to what is beyond the self, so also on an institutional level, the Ateneo de Davao University must reach out beyond its internal concerns to the outside community. We must further develop and more actively explore how the talents and resources and capabilities of the University can be put in the service of Davao and Mindanao, and even of the nation should the opportunity present itself.

There are more than enough failings in our country that one can point at and complain about, and many do, and some even do nothing but complain. Unfortunately often enough these failings are beyond our direct control. There are, however, even more opportunities and resources within our control that we can exploit, through which we can create. If we are to get anywhere, we must put on the mentality whereby we assume that others in our society will do their jobs, just as we do *our* jobs; and if, in fact, they do not do *their* jobs, then in time, we will just pass them by and carry on despite them!

What then happens to academic excellence, the development of courses, the launching of new and varied and exciting programs — the accepted indicators of a University that is alive and well? That, in a sense, will be the test case whether this direction

of caring and creating a community is valid or not, feasible or not. By their fruits you shall know them!

I, on my part — and I am sure all my brother Jesuits are one with me in this sentiment — through words and action, policies and decisions, will seek to show that the leadership of the University cares for the Ateneo de Davao community, and particularly for the faculty. That caring, I hope, will be an invitation for the community and the faculty, in turn, to care for their sheep — the students that they teach, the publics that we serve. It is an oft-repeated truth that the talents, creativity, expertise, and strength of any university lie in its faculty. It is this tremendous potential that I hope love and caring will unleash.

And so, I invite the Ateneo de Davao University community : let us join hands, and together walk towards a noble mission — a mission of such great worth that God himself sent his only begotten Son to be one like us, so that by the example of his life, we cannot fail to understand what it means to be fully human.

I thank you.