

THE EDUCATIONAL IDEAL AND PRESENT SITUATION AT FU JEN UNIVERSITY

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translated by Peter Barry

In 1981, I gave a talk to a group of the principals and directors of Catholic elementary schools of Taiwan on the purpose and special characteristics of Catholic education. This address was later published in I-Shih magazine, and appeared again as part of my book Philosophy of Life.(1) My thoughts reflected the basic view of two Vatican documents: the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Christian Education, and the 1972 paper prepared by the Vatican's Department of Education entitled: "Catholic Schools in a Pluralistic Society". The Declaration states that the purpose of Christian education is to nurture the moral life and character of the student. Catholic education is meant to develop further the young Catholic's knowledge of the mystery of salvation and guide him along the path of virtue, with special emphasis on the virtue of justice. From "Catholic Schools in a Pluralistic Society", I quoted paragraph 33, wherein Catholic schools are instructed to become living symbols of, and bear witness to, Christ and His Church. They are to insure the presence of the Church in a non-Christian society and serve as instruments of Catholic action among intellectuals. All of this means that Catholic education has a definite pastoral responsibility within the context of the overall pastoral ministry of the Church to the world.

When on August 2, 1978 I was installed as President of Fu Jen University, I spelled out this pastoral dimension of my educational ideals in the following words: "As I accept this responsibility today, all can see that I do so garbed in the attire of a Roman Catholic bishop. A bishop, according to the teachings of Christ, is to be a shepherd, one who is to serve his flock with a shepherd's love, leading them to waters of refreshment and pasturing them in verdant fields. Jesus has also said that the good shepherd is willing to lay down his life for his sheep. I see the fulfillment of my responsibilities as president, then, not merely as the administrator of an office, but rather as a pastoral commitment to a community of people.

The purpose of education as stated in the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Christian Education is the moral training of the student. Fu Jen University seeks to promote this educational ideal. We want our students to become mature and integrated persons with a highly developed

moral sense. All our students at Fu Jen are aware that they should conduct themselves with dignity and cultivate a generous spirit of service to others. Our professors are encouraged to teach by both word and example, guiding their students on the road of progress. The accumulation of knowledge is important, but the way of life is more important. Ancient China's respect for the role of the teacher and its serious concern for the way of life might be simply stated in the following words: "The teacher instructs the students in the way of becoming a total person by following that way himself, and because he respects his teacher, the student, too, follows the same way." (2)

During the past 10 years, I have striven to direct all of Fu Jen's educational activities in the direction of this ideal.

Although Fu Jen University is a Catholic University, there are only 500 Catholics in an enrolment of about 15,000. Among our 1,100 professors, Catholics number about 150, including 50 priests and 20 sisters. According to the Republic of China's education laws, religion is forbidden to be a required course, nor is the school allowed to require its students to attend religious ceremonies.

Given this concrete situation, Fu Jen implements the following educational policies as expressions of its Catholic ideals:

1. The school has an open policy, accepting students and teachers whether they espouse a religious affiliation or not. The only qualifier among professors is that they refrain from publicly attacking the Catholic Church in their lectures. Fu Jen is also open in its administration. The professors elect their own representatives to three committees responsible for educational administration, discipline, guidance, and general affairs. After reviewing certain problems, the teachers as a group make their recommendations known to the president. The president in turn passes these on to the Campus Affairs Committee of the University for discussion. According to the University's by-laws, representatives of the teachers also participate in the meetings of this committee. At present student representatives are also in attendance at such meetings. According to the University's by-laws, however, representatives of the teachers and students do not attend the meetings of the Administrative Board or of the Disciplinary Committee. Only persons directly concerned with these matters attend such meetings.

2. The University emphasizes moral education. Since the founding of Fu Jen, Philosophy of Life has been a required course for all students. In recent years, due to the rapid expansion in subjects dealing with

scientific technology and economics, certain department heads from the Schools of Engineering and Business Administration have requested that this course be dropped from the list of required courses. The request was refused. Instead, I myself taught the course for a year, and wrote a reference book on The Philosophy of Life for both teachers and students.

3. The University is particularly concerned with nurturing among our students an active spirit of charity and concern for others. A student counselling centre has been established where psychological counselling is provided to help students know themselves better. We also ask each full-time professor to take on personal guidance responsibilities, directing students in their academic studies as well as their moral development. We also ask the religious sisters and clergy on our faculty to offer personal guidance to students by both word and example.

4. Another important goal of ours is education for self-reliance. Taiwan's middle school students for six years are subjected each day to supplementary tutorial classes wherein masses of material are learned by rote in order to pass college entrance examinations. Upon entering the university, such students suddenly find themselves relieved of this forced burden and now are in a position to determine freely large blocks of time for themselves. Fu Jen encourages them to participate in a host of student organizations and clubs. Here they are encouraged to take personal initiative in planning their own activities. Our day school has 120 and evening school has 49 such student organizations, each responsible for the election of its own officers.

One of the reasons why three years ago we established a course on Introduction to Philosophy as a required course for each department was to train the students in methods of independent thinking. Chinese students studying overseas have frequently been criticized for their lack of ability to think independently. The main reason is because, from the beginning of middle school, their sole method of learning has been the memorization of data. We work to correct the results of this passive learning situation .

5. The University has established an Office of Religious Counselling. Fu Jen Catholic students participate in the Catholic Student Association, an organization that runs religious instruction classes and bible study groups. The Association also has a choir and a liturgical committee. It also oversees two social service groups: the Xing Xin and Tong Zhou societies, each having 500 members. These societies are involved in off-campus social service works, such as helping the blind and working in a leprosarium.

Several priests and sisters have initiated classes where they explain the teachings of the Catholic faith to both Catholic and non-Catholic students. Also, each year the school sponsors a "Religious Week" to arouse interest in Christianity. Once a year, we invite both Catholic and non-Catholic students to attend a special Mass in honor of our ancestors. Despite such efforts, however, in recent years the number of students baptized into the Church average only about 10-20 per year.

6. In our academic research, while Fu Jen's primary emphasis is on ideas in general, we do also publish books specifically on Catholic thought as reference material for both teachers and students.

Since Fu Jen is a private university, we have neither the personnel nor the financial means to compete with government sponsored universities in the size of our departments and the number of courses offered. As a result, we are seriously attempting to expand those courses in which we are strong and other universities are weak. For instance our philosophy, foreign languages and physical education departments are stronger than those at most other universities. Some departments such as mass communications and domestic science, are not even to be found at other universities. In fact, Fu Jen recruits those students who show a desire to enter these departments as their first choice.

Our research institutes in religious studies and translation, which were established this year, represent a first in Taiwan post-secondary education. We are also planning to set up a research center in Sino-western cultural studies, to which post-doctoral researchers will be invited.

Fu Jen is often praised as having a beautiful campus, and it is generally considered to provide students with a disciplined and serious atmosphere for their study. However, as far as being a center for Catholic thought and the spreading of the Gospel as are Catholic universities in America or Europe, we still have a long way to go. At the same time, existing as we do in a non-Christian country where the government education code does not permit religious instruction in the classroom, Fu Jen University still strives to attain the ideals mandated by the Vatican's Department of Education. Fu Jen affirms that the Catholic Church in Free China can and does serve as an instrument for exchange between Chinese intellectuals and the universal Catholic Church.

Footnotes

1. Lokuang, Philosophy and Life, published by the China Times Enterprise Company.
2. Lokuang, Selected Writings at Age 70, published by Fu Jen University.