

Conclusions of the I African
Seminar (Dec. 57)



GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Each Catholic student community working in a University must make its members aware of the general principles which should govern their action.

A. MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

1. The Mystical Body is the sharing of the life of Christ by men of all races and nations in a strong and deep unity with Him.

2. In the Mystical Body everyone is really unique, as Christ is the source of each and every person. The belonging to the Mystical Body presupposes therefore a close personal relationship with Christ.

3. Being a supernatural reality the Mystical Body cannot be identified with any kind of civilization or culture. But as It is formed by incarnated people living in an incarnated world, It assumes their positive values.

4. The Mystical Body is not complete until It embraces the whole of mankind. Each member must strive for this fulfillment which forms the driving force of the apostolate.

B. THE LAY APOSTOLATE :

1. Whereas the Lay Apostolate is a participation in the Apostolate of the Hierarchy, it is lived by people working in the temporal order who infuse this order with the love of the Mystical Body.

2. The Lay Apostolate is not a mere task : it is an expression of life and an integration of both the being and the doing. Its very basis is love.

3. The Lay Apostolate has to provide people with adequate training for all spheres of life providing conditions for efficient action and formation in specialized fields of apostolic activity.

4. The University Apostolate has a specific purposes a)- the christianization of the University, b)- to serve the Church by putting ones intellectual talents to work for its mission.

5. In the general framework of the lay apostolate woman has a specific part to play. As Our Lady made possible the physical life of Christ by her fiat, so women are called to give their spiritual gifts to the building of Christ's Mystical Body. While men are the active principle of society, women are the source of love.



C. THE MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY :

1. The University is not defined by the social or (even less) technical implications and needs of the country. Its very mission lays above the changing features of the time and space. It serves Truth and must be entirely devoted to it. Nevertheless one important factor the University has to take into account is the needs of the country.

2. A University is a training centre for intellectual formation on the highest level. More important than providing technical know-how is its task of training people to find solutions to problems themselves, in the light of their theoretical background. Such a basic training is of particular importance where students are faced with quickly changing situations as in Africa.

3. The University is a centre of propagation and deepening of scientific and cultural values. This task enables it to give clear guidance to society. When the changing features of the society ask for a definite attitude, University must state clearly its orientation.

4. A University must be a source of leaders for the society, giving to the students a true human formation. It enables them to guide their people by their service in the professional, social, and political life.

THE UNIVERSITY IN AFRICA

The specific role of the University points out the need for clear and fruitfull relations between the University and the social institutions which are more decisive for human life, that means, the state, the Church, and society as a whole.

A. THE UNIVERSITY AND THE STATE :

1. Politics is the domain of the "possible" things and culture is the domain of the "right" things. Belonging to the cultural order, the University stands above the State - it can't compromise Truth in the solutions the State is working for and has nothing to do with political choices. The universality of culture obliges the University in Africa to stand above any kind of rationalisms.

2. To be a real University, sharing the universal Truth and covering in its curricula the most essential domains of human knowledge is the condition for the fulfillment of its task towards the State.



In Africa, this means concretely that the University must have a close relationship with other Universities and try not to be confined to only one field of cultural activities.

3. In the changing political situations of Africa, the University can't be indifferent to the State. On the contrary, it must exercise a rigid control on the State, not in the political sphere but in the cultural values involved. Even more, it must be for the State a real inspiration giving to it a source of thoughts and ways for practical solutions.

4. In its task of formation of the individuals, the University has also an important role towards the State - it provides the leaders, administrators and members of the professions, by which the machinery of government is controlled.

Fully aware that many students will be leaders in the body politic, the African University has to provide them with :

- a solid background on civic life where the rights of the human person and the pursuit of common welfare are essential.
- an exact knowledge of the different forms and methods that the State has taken in the occidental work
- a deep understanding and evaluation of the politic conceptions of the African people
- a skilled training for the civic life offering them opportunities for leadership in the student's and social life and giving them growing responsibilities.

5. The State has also some duties towards the University. As the University is intended for the formation of the individuals, the State has to give to its most capable citizens the possibility to acquire this formation. As a whole the University is an institution contributing decisively to the common good. The State has, therefore, the duty to support the University. In Africa, where growing needs for a clear guidance and leadership have arisen, the State has a very special duty to provide society with the competent leaders and specialized professionals it needs.

6. The financial support given by the State to the University doesn't imply that the State would control the University - here it is a real danger for the freedom of the University. But, of course, the State has the duty and the right to safeguard that the University is always serving the common good. When conflicts arise the State is, at least, the responsible organ for the promotion of the common good.

7. The freedom and independence of the University towards the State is usually called University autonomy. This means, the work of the University demands the freedom to teach and to study without fear of interference, the freedom for the University to employ what lecturers it considers suitable, and to admit what students it judges to be qualified. The State should only interfere in the conduct of the University when its activity is a danger to the well-being of the society.



8. A danger to University autonomy arises from the political activity of its members. The University as an institution must maintain a strict political neutrality. The teaching members must make a clear distinction between their political life and their University life; the student's first work is to study to prepare himself for life, so that his political activity must not interfere with this preparation, and should be separated from his University life.

9. A special duty of the State in the African countries is to help University to acquire a good position in the world University community, mainly through exchange of ideas and persons and through a basic attitude of confidence that the University will be able to find its own way.

B. THE UNIVERSITY AND SOCIETY :

1. Society is leaded by ideas, expressed in theories or in habits, traditions and ways of life. University is the source of ideas and must radiate them in order to enable society to find the right pattern and to make the right options. In the African situation there is a real need for the guidance of the University on :

- the exact evolution of cultural conceptions and schemes of life coming from Europe
- the study of the cultural elements of the African society, the research in this field and clear guidance on their value.

2. In its role of leading society in the cultural level, African Universities must be deeply aware of the evolution taken by the European society during the centuries. In this way, African society can avoid certain faults that have spoilt the European civilization, namely the sacrifice of man in the first steps of the industrialization, and the fight among different people owing to exaggerated nationalisms. On the other side, African society can learn from Europe the lesson of the "liberté foncière" of the individual, the presence, even incomplete, of Christianity in the social structures and law, the respect towards the basic elements of society, the dignity of woman and the unity and independence of the family.

3. African society has not to be fashioned in foreign patterns. It has its own values, which can lead it to the full achievement of its own expression and make its contribution really unique in the concert of the nations. A cultural valuable synthesis, at the same time African and universal, is needed. It is the task of the University to give a definite contribution to the theoretical foundations of this synthesis, making research on this field.

4. A culture, a conception of life is translated daily in customs of the people and in the running out of the different activities. In the changing situation of Africa, University professions, being the opportunity of leading for very few, are the



normal channel for this culture. Forming competent professionals, trained in their specialized fields and able to integrate them in a human vision of life and man, the University has a tremendous influence on society.

5. In countries where a great majority of people are still illiterate, University has a specific responsibility to undertake on its shoulders the task of cultural extension and the contribution to men education. University students guided by the University bodies can be orientated to such a kind of work in villages, during vacations.

6. In the economic and social developments that are now taking place in Africa, University can't stand in an ivory tower, isolated from the vital needs of the people. It has the very specific task to form in the students a spirit of service and dedication towards the society. As a whole, the University has to point out any kind of prejudice of races (not only against black but also against white people) or supremacy of classes.

7. Society is made by men and women. There, each sex has its own part to play. Woman is the complement of man in society. Her role in society is a specific one - motherhood is the widest expression of this role. It can be fulfilled in the family, through physical motherhood, but also in the society, through spiritual motherhood. Of course, this role can only be fulfilled if there is a basic equality between man and woman, as human beings, children of God and citizens of the State. University has an important part to play :

- it has to give to the women students a clear understanding and a specific formation for their role
- it has to form an elite of capable women able to lead other women and to find solutions for the specific problems women have to face in social life, family, education and profession.
- it has to develop a deep research on the situation of the African woman and give a clear guidance about it.

8. Society, in turn, has to have a basic attitude towards the University. Society must ask from the University people great competence in the technical field but something more also - a true leadership and devotion to the service of all classes and social institutions. Society has therefore to be exigent. But it has also to give a clear recognition of University people and of their specific action in society. It can't impose to them (directly or through the social structures - the family, the clan or the tribe) any kind of pressure which would make him to compromise his essential mission of service.

C. THE UNIVERSITY AND RELIGION :

1. The attitude of students in University in what religion as such is concerned, is strongly influenced by the following factors:
- the attitude of lecturers and authorities towards religion (many tend to atheism in African University)



- the teaching of religion which is practically inexistant
- the religious outlook in which secular studies are envisaged (every branche as if God would not exist and if the Church would not give any ideas for life).
- the religious formation given at the secondary school -this is often divorced from life and presented from outside not going to the students the possibility of thinking by themselves.
- the idea that religion prevents them to take a positive attitude in politics

2. It is obvious that religion must have a place in University. University is formed by men and man is not complete without the religious outlook. Also University is a moral person who must confess Truth. The teaching and research carried at the University are truly human is so far as they are achieved in a deep vision of God and of His Revelation to men. The University might therefore recognise Catholic faith and spread it. However, owing to the particular conditions of the country in Africa where catholics are a minority and where other religions (namely Moslem and Protestantism) are very much spread, the University, can stand on a level of religious openness or at least, neutrality. Still, in these conditions, it must always recognise the ultimate values of God and spirit and give to the students the possibility to become more acquainted with the doctrine and life of their religion. Practically it must provide chaplains, literature and build chapels.

3. University as an institution and University people as individuals have the duty "to give to theology the tools of the secular knowledge". This is very specially needed for a real incarnation of Christianity in African society. University has the special duty to undertake a deep work of research on the religious values and symbols in the African customs and traditions and to provide theology which the results of such work. The task of the Catholic University is a very special one in this matter. Because of this ideal, a Catholic University would be the only University in which the proper development of man could take place. In fact a Catholic University can be impossible or unwise in many cases, and Catholic students will attend neutral Universities.

4. The Catholic University has the possibility of forming a good Catholic elite within a few years and this is a very important long-range goal which has in Africa great actuality. On the other side, the presence of Catholics in African neutral Universities is most needed in order to make them the Church lived out. It is always upon the Hierarchy to decide what is the most urgent for the Church but it is felt that we must never sacrifice a wider perspective (even if it takes more time) to imediate action.

5. Catholic University in Africa has a very special role to play as most of the students are non-Catholics. It must exerce on them a true apostolic influence, without obliging them to participate in all religious activities. It must provide an appealing way of life, the warmness and beauty of Christ's doctrine, the unifying center and purpose of every thought feeling and activity.

6. Church has also a definite attitude towards University. First, University were born near the Church and the Church has always encouraged the University work of formation and study. Secondly, in our days, the Holy Father has pointed out very often the specific role of the University. Higher education is for some people an indispensable way of personal fulfillment and the means to accomplish their vocation towards society. Missionaries in Africa can never undermine the work of the University, because it is contrary to the feeling of the Church. They must, on the contrary, fight for a true higher education with a great level providing to the most valuable people possibility to attend the University courses.

Another aspect of the activity of the Church among University people is a clear explanation of other religions, their principles and their errors.



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Part III - RESPONSABILITIES OF CATHOLIC SOCIETIES IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Being the presence of the Church in the University, Catholic societies have as their most essential aim to bring Christ to the University and to all spheres of life related with it.

Action towards the individuals

1. All apostolate must be directed towards individuals, fully aware that the deep dialogue between souls is the very basis of all programs and activities.

Catholic societies must, therefore, form in every member a dynamic and zealous apostle. Providing lectures and publications on the fundamentals of the lay apostolate and giving good training on methods and techniques are one of their tasks.

2. Apostolate is inspired by the spiritual life which is its very source. Mass must be the centre of all religious life for the student and also the centre of all apostolic activity for the Catholic society.

3. Catholic societies have a special duty to complement the work done by the University in human formation of the students, providing them with the ethical background on their professions, clarifying their position as Catholics in the neutral organizations, preparing them for a Christian vision of their participation in civic life, forming each one of them in the truth of his unique vocation and, most specially, preparing women students for their specific role in society.

Action on the local level

To put our efforts into the organization of the activities of our societies and groups in order to make sure that they spread Christian influence as widely as possible.

Action on the national level

- To assure the collaboration between the different Catholic societies

- To collaborate with the other student organizations and to fulfil, in them, the role which the Church and our fellows expect of us

- To be ready to create graduate groups so that the work begun in the University may continue in the world of the profession

- To make sure, by means of meetings and articles in student journals, that the work done at our seminar becomes widely known

- To promote the study of African customs and of their integration in Christianity, whenever it is possible; to give the results to the Hierarchy.

Action on the regional level

To make sure that there is a wide collaboration

- by organizing regional meetings
- by giving one of the federations the task of organizing activities for the region
- by means of visits of the leaders of federations to other federations, specially on the occasion of great meetings
- by exchange of correspondence between the students of different countries

Action on the African level

- To make sure that the "African Newsletter" is published regularly and circulated widely
- To envisage a new "African Seminar" which will take place as soon as possible
- To make one day a week a special day of prayer for

PAX ROMANA

- To follow up the work done at the present Seminar forming true leaders who will be able to rethink all the universal values of our International Movement in terms of the African reality.

Action on the world level

- To collaborate with international student organizations (WUS - WAY - UNSA)
- To make sure that Africa is well represented at the meetings of PAX ROMANA
- To keep in contact with African students in foreign countries and to understand their problems. To prepare the students who leave the country.
- Relations with the other continents in order to profit from their experiences
- The appointment of an African Secretary at Fribourg
- A monthly day of prayer for the intention of all the students in the world.

