

Catholic Businessmen's Forum

Sun 30 June, 2013 - Leela Ramdeen's presentation

Venue: Hilton Hotel and Conference Centre, POS

John Paul II Centre on Fatherhood: Companions of the Transfigured Christ (CTC)

Good morning, my brothers and sisters. It is a pleasure to be here with you for the 2nd Annual Catholic Businessmen's Forum. It is good every now and then to step back and reflect on how we integrate our faith with our daily lives. Firstly, I wish to remind us of the purpose of our gathering which is

- To promote a catholic corporate identity
- Business networking
- Social justice
- Male mentoring
- Ethical corporate governance; and
- Corporate social responsibility

among Catholic businessmen in our national community.

Such sessions really facilitates networking. However, it is important, as you network, to ensure that those on your close network are all reading from the same page. You don't want to let others take you down the wrong path. We are gathered here today as Christians. What does this mean for us as businesspeople; as workers in God's vineyard?

"For the Christian living in the middle of the world, he or she must choose to act responsibly in daily work. Work should be ordered to the glory of God, to the service of society, to the fulfillment of family obligations. It also provides a vital area for personal apostolate." – (Francis Fernandez, In Conversation with God, Volume 5, p.292-293).

I have no doubt that each of you have worked and continue to work hard to make your business successful in a difficult local and global economic environment. As you do so, I want to remind you of our biblical mandate which should underpin our every action. Today's readings are particularly pertinent to our discussion. Where does God figure in your business? Today's Responsorial Psalm (16) states: "I set the LORD ever before me; with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed. R. You are my inheritance, O Lord. (Ps 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11)

In the Second Reading taken from St Paul's letter to the Galatians (Gal 5:1, 13-18) . He said to them: "Serve one another in works of love, since the whole of the Law is summarized in a single command: *Love your neighbour as yourself*. If you go snapping at each other and tearing each other to pieces, you had better watch or you will destroy the whole community....I say, then: live by the Spirit." That scriptural reading goes on to tell us in verse 22-23 that the Spirit brings us

“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control...Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit.” Do you let the Spirit guide you in our homes, in your business, in your daily lives?

Today’s Gospel [Lk 9:51-62](#) also has a message for us. We are reminded that once we set our hand to the plough as followers of Christ, there is no turning back – no matter what sacrifices we have to make. Remember our vocation; as Catholics we are called to holiness. As is stated in the Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium* (31, 39,40):

“By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will ... They are called by God [to] contribute to the sanctification of the world ... by fulfilling their own particular duties... All in the Church, whether they belong to the hierarchy or are cared for by it, are called to holiness. ... The followers of Christ ... have been made sons of God in the baptism of faith and partakers of the divine nature, and so are truly sanctified ... It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love, and by this holiness a more human manner of life is fostered also in earthly society.”

I want to refer you to a document on business ethics which I urge you to study. It will help you to integrate your faith with your business. This 30-page document was presented by Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in March 2012 at the XXIV UNIAPAC World Congress in Lyon, France. UNIAPAC is the *International Christian Union of Business Executives*. It is entitled: “Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection.” You can access it online. As one writer states: “This handbook is not prescriptive; it does not dictate policy but offers a guide to business leaders in the service of the common good. The intention is to encourage and inspire business leaders to incorporate their faith in their daily lives.”

The document states that it “aims to encourage and inspire leaders and other stakeholders in businesses to see the challenges and opportunities in their work; to judge them according to ethical social principles, illumined for Christians by the Gospel; and to act as leaders who serve God.”

Cardinal Turkson reminds us that “When businesses and market economies function properly and focus on serving the common good, they contribute greatly to the material and even the spiritual well-being of society. Recent experience, however, has also demonstrated the harm caused by the failings of businesses and markets. The transformative developments of our era—globalisation, communications technologies, and financialisation—produce problems alongside their benefits: inequality, economic dislocation, information overload, financial instability and many other pressures leading away from serving the common good. Business leaders, who are

guided by ethical social principles, lived through virtues and illuminated for Christians by the Gospel, can, nonetheless, succeed and contribute to the common good.

“Obstacles to serving the common good come in many forms—lack of rule of law, corruption, tendencies towards greed, poor stewardship of resources—but the most significant for a business leader on a personal level is leading a “divided” life. This split between faith and daily business practice can lead to imbalances and misplaced devotion to worldly success. The alternative path of faith-based “servant leadership” provides business leaders with a larger perspective and helps to balance the demands of the business world with those of ethical social principles, illumined for Christians by the Gospel. This is explored through three stages: seeing, judging, and acting, even though it is clear that these three aspects are deeply interconnected.”

The document outlines 6 practical principles which should underpin your business. Although I share these with you (see handout – and below), it would help if you read the entire document which refers to the words of Blessed John Paul II who stated that business “is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a *community of persons* who in various ways are endeavouring to satisfy their basic needs, and who form a particular group at the service of the whole of society (57)... When we consider a business organisation as a community of persons, it becomes clear that the bonds which hold us in common are not merely legal contracts or mutual self-interests, but commitments to real goods, shared with others to serve the world.”

Handout 1: THE VOCATION OF THE BUSINESS LEADER: A REFLECTION CARDINAL PETER TURKSON, PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

SIX PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES FOR BUSINESS (para 50)

“The principles of respect for **human dignity** and pursuit of the **common good** are the foundations of the Church’s social teaching. Joined with the six practical principles of business, they can offer more specific guidance on the three broad business objectives.

Meeting the Needs of the World through the Creation and Development of Goods and Services

1. Businesses that produce goods which are truly good and services which truly serve *contribute to the common good*.
2. Businesses maintain *solidarity* with the poor by being alert for opportunities to serve otherwise deprived and underserved populations and people in need.

Organising Good and Productive Work

3. Businesses make a contribution to the community by fostering the special *dignity of human work*.

4. Businesses provide, through *subsidiarity*, opportunities for employees to exercise appropriate authority as they contribute to the mission of the organisation.

Creating Sustainable Wealth and Distributing it justly

5. Businesses model *stewardship* of the resources – whether capital, human, or environmental – they have received.
6. Businesses are *just* in the allocation of resources to all stakeholders: employees, customers, investors, suppliers, and the community.

Perhaps, as John Allen, National Catholic Reporter states, “the most striking element of the text...comes in its appendix. There one finds a ‘Discernment Checklist for the Business Leader,’ composed of thirty questions which amount to an examination of conscience informed by Catholic social teaching.” I have shared these questions with you in a handout.

Allen states that “among other things, the document says that ethically responsible business is a ‘vehicle of cultural engagement’ and a force for ‘peace and prosperity’, that it has ‘a special role to play in the unfolding of creation,’ and that through creative work, people don’t just ‘make more’ but ‘become more’...The document also says something out loud which might seem stunningly obvious...that financial profit is a perfectly legitimate aim of business, albeit not the only one. ‘If financial wealth is not created,” the document says, “it cannot be distributed and organizations cannot be sustained...”

So, having shared the above with you, I want to share some more practical ways in which you can integrate your faith with your business. We are called to work in fidelity and witness to Christ in all that we do. I wish to draw on some examples given to me by some of my business friends e.g.

1. Firstly, it is important that, by your conduct, people know that you are a Christian. As is stated in Phillipians 1:27: “Only let your conduct be worthy of Christ...” – let others see that Christ is at work in you. To truly understand how Christ wants you to live your life, you must continuously strive to deepen your faith. To evangelize, we must be rooted in our faith. Is your faith alive? I encourage you to keep abreast with developments in our Church; learn about the social doctrine of our Church. Many are not aware of the rich heritage contained in the social teaching of our Church. During this Year of Faith Pope Benedict XVI asked us to read our Scriptures, the Catechism, the Creed; read about the Church Fathers and about the lives of the saints. We can only truly live our faith and share it with others if we KNOW our faith.
2. As an educationalist, the first thing that strikes me as I enter an educational institution is what is called “the hidden curriculum” – how are the values, virtues, morals that you espouse reflected e.g. in the displays along the walls, how people interact with/relate to each other, wages and working conditions etc. If I enter your business place, how would I

know that you are a Catholic? Is there any artwork, a cross, a statue etc that helps to create a Christian ethos?

Bishop Jason Gordon rightly said some time ago that: “Morality is not only about the actions we do. It is about the whole disposition and orientation of our life.” We must not leave our morality home when we go to school, to work, to shop etc. Do you take your morality to work with you? If you do, this will help you to set standards of ethical behaviour among workers – the community of persons who work together should behave in a manner consistent with what is right or moral – objective moral norms should underpin your work. (Elaborate on the dictatorship of moral relativism).

The Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church tells us that “relations within the world of work must be marked by cooperation; hatred and attempts to eliminate the other are completely unacceptable...both labour and capital represent indispensable components to the process of production” (#306).

As the writer Joseph Fahey writes: “When employers and employees collaborate together in the pursuit of their individual good the result is an increase in the universal common good.” (elaborate on the meaning of the “common good”).

My friend, Paul Donovan, a journalist in London, reminds us that CST “strongly supports the concept of the corporate responsibility of employers for workers within the context of the common good.” Our Catechism states that “business owners and management must not limit themselves to taking into account only the economic objectives of the company, the criteria for economic efficiency and the proper care of “capital” as the sum of the means of production. It is also their precise duty to respect concretely the human dignity of those who work in the company.” Pope John Paul II’s encyclical, *The One Hundredth Year* (1991), states that workers constitute “the firm’s most valuable asset.”

3. If I look at your headed paper in your business, would I know that it is your faith that “drives” you in your enterprise? Kenneth Hekman, in his article: 12 ways to integrate your faith with your practice, gives an example from Barbourville (Kentucky) Family Physicians: “Ministering the love of God through health care.”
4. In some Christian businesses the bosses find time to pray with staff, and/or allocate space where staff can pray – whatever their religious beliefs. You must also underpin all your work with prayer. It is prayer that will help you to live your faith more effectively.
5. Hekman rightly states, you should respect your staff, customers etc. Manage your business “by the golden rule” – “showing respect for staff through consistent, compassionate routines. That may include suggestions like these:
 - Stay on schedule or apologize sincerely when you’re not
 - Conduct (customer) satisfaction surveys and act on the feedback
 - Maintain market wages and benefits
 - Listen to your staff’s suggestions for improving your service. Are you paying them a wage sufficient to support them and their family” (see Pius XI, 1931 – The 40th Year

- On Reconstruction of the social Order (#71). (of course this depends on the terms and conditions of their employment – part-time etc).
- Provide consistent and regular feedback to your staff about their performance, and support their professional development
- Resolve conflicts at the office before they become disruptive.

Respect for staff, clients/customers/your environment will come more easily if you see Christ in each person and if you embrace environmental justice.

6. “Manage your resources as for the Lord – Colossians 3:23 says it best: ‘Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord...’ Being a good steward of your business might include these actions:
 - ...Prioritize your time and energy to balance your life. You can’t be helpful if you aren’t healthy
 - Plan for the future. Develop and implement a strategic budget and plan for your business with wise counsel and sound management.
7. It is helpful to note that although Hekman suggests that people in your position should “Align with other Christians”, he adds a Caveat: “Beware also of aligning with others simply because they identify themselves as Christians. Long term compatibility depends on a wide variety of factors that go far beyond a common love for the Lord.”

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote a letter in preparation for the VII World Meetings of Families, which was held in the Italian city of Milan from 30 May to 2 June 2012, on the theme: **"The Family: Work and Rest"**. He said that “work and rest” are intimately associated with the life of families. They influence the choices the family makes, the relationship between the spouses and among parents and children, and they affect the dealings the family has with society and with the Church.”

He continues: “In our own time, unfortunately, the organization of work, which is planned and implemented as a function of market competition and maximising profit, and the concept of rest as a time for evasion and consumption, contribute to the break-up of families and communities, and to the spread of an individualistic lifestyle.

“It is therefore necessary to reflect and commit ourselves to reconciling the demands and requirements of work with those of the family, and to recover the true significance of rest, especially on Sundays, the weekly Easter, the day of the Lord and the day of man, the day of the family, of the community and of solidarity.”

These are just some of the ways in which you can integrate your faith into your business.

Some of you may know the story of the TWO WOLVES. I want to end with this story: “One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, "My son, the battle is between two wolves inside us all.

"One is Evil - It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false, pride, superiority and ego.

"The other is Good - It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather:
"Which wolf wins?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

Think carefully about which one you are feeding. I urge you to feed the one that will enable you to be an authentic witness to Christ.

Let us thank God for the gifts that He has bestowed upon each of us. Your business acumen and your business are gifts from God. You are stewards of these gifts – use them well to build the common good.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will guide each of you to develop your businesses in a way that is consistent with the tenets of our faith. Lord, strengthen those gathered here today in their faith. Help them to be mentors to others; to use the gifts that you have given to them in the service of the Church and the nation; and to proclaim their faith in their everyday life. Fill them with the vision that you have for us in T&T and inspire them to work with others – standing side by side - to achieve that vision. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

I thank you.