



## E-BULLETIN # 17

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*"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5,16)*

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### ITEM 38

#### **My Study Experience in the University of St LaSalle Bacolod City - Philippines**

As I began my study for a Masters in Educational Management at the University of St LaSalle, Bacolod City, Philippines, I had an eagerness to learn and experience new adventures, and the idea of exposing myself to completely different cultures excited me. The tie between education and pastoral exposure sounded like the perfect combination and I was ready to make it happen!

Alongside my studies I have had an enriching experience of campus ministry. That is, I was deeply involved in serving the spiritual needs of the students. It was an incredible experience. It was so amazing to see the cultural differences, and even more amazing to learn the different ways people do things. Each day of my study and pastoral experience was a challenge, but a nice one. I got to understand the local dialect, to learn about the food, about people from other nationalities, and to live together with international students – all of which was great for my social networks and expanded my cultural knowledge considerably.

For me, studying in the University of St LaSalle, Bacolod City, Philippines, has been what I would like to describe as a **"Life-Changing Experience"**. Life-changing experience is a fantastic description, in as much it has truly broadened my sphere of knowledge and increased my self-confidence. It has served as a catalyst for an increased maturity, and has had a lasting impact on my world view. It has enhanced my interest in academic study, helped me to better understand my own cultural values and biases, and influenced me to seek out a greater diversity of friends.

It continues to influence my interactions with people from different cultures. It's truly amazing one!!!

**Sanjib Pani sac [RA] – Bacolod City – PHILIPPINES**  
17.05.12  
sanju\_pani@rediffmail.com

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### ITEM 37

#### **MODERNITY and CHRISTIANITY**

Throughout the period of ancient civilizations humans have displayed plurality of belief. There were varieties of pagan cults with differing and sometimes conflicting views of right and wrong, each with its own perspective on life. However with the birth of Christianity all of that changed; relativism and plurality were progressively exchanged for faith in the one true God. Throughout the Middle Ages European public life was dominated by the certainties of the Christian faith. But as Europe moved out of the Middle Ages

various influences began to encroach upon its thinking. From the fourteenth century onwards, history witnessed the influence of the Renaissance, sowing the seeds of free thinking. The resultant effect was Reformation. Since the sixteenth century we see the power of the Reformation. New scientific discoveries regarding the nature of the world and the universe could be discerned. These influences gradually lead to what historians generally term as the era of the Enlightenment, and this culminated in the birth of Modernity, with its new certainties and meta-narratives. These are facets of modernity which in turn generate the process of secularization.

In common understanding modernity is thought to be a movement against religion. And modernity did seek to relegate religion to the realm of the privacy of the individual sphere, denying religion the authority of reason and knowledge which were now reserved for the public sphere. It was modernity of the enlightenment which hastened the process of secularization.

However according to Charles Taylor modernity is not the result, either good or bad, of the struggle of the ancient world against the darkness of religious powers. It is a new and different culture, with specific value systems and a new background, with its own language and a set of practices, which define specific understandings of personhood, social relations, states of mind and soul, good and bad, virtues and vices. Modernity is the affirmation of ordinary life: an amalgam of new practices, institutional forms and ways of living centered in the enhancement of human life. Western religions have been inevitably impacted by modernity. Important changes that religions and churches suffered during the transition towards modernity may be misunderstood as something perennial, when they were actually novelties of those times.

Though in many ways Western modernity has been inhospitable to religious belief, it has to be admitted that at the same time modern culture has done much more work for Gospel values in the realm of human rights than Christendom did. The affirmation of universal human rights as radically unconditional was due to the breakdown with the structures of Christendom. Not every outcome of Western modernity is 'against' religion. Since modernity has been inspired by some Christian ideas, and since religion has been modified by modern culture, exhibiting a sort of symbolic relation between the two, there are consequently chances for positive interaction and mutual enhancement between them.

Moreover in thinking about the relationship between Christianity and modern culture we need to keep these factors in mind: first, modernity at the outset was not opposed to the Christian faith; second, the over dominance of religion in every aspect of life and its uncompromising doctrines were directly responsible for the rise of a secularist culture. What Christianity as a religion should learn from this is that it must be ready to accept criticism, and to cultivate an ethos of self-criticism within its own communities. Traditional doctrines and forms of spirituality are not exempt from critical enquiry. Christianity should always keep in mind modernity's original promises, emphasizing and stressing the affirmation of ordinary life. As St Vincent Pallotti would say, holiness consisted in doing God's will in whatever state of life one is in.

St Vincent Pallotti, who was living around this time of free thinking and enlightenment, did contribute his share to revive the faith of Catholics. His movement towards lay apostolate, which was subjected to strong criticism and attack, was novel thinking for his time. He inspired everyone – teacher in the school, doctor in the hospital, clerk in the office, professor in the university – to realize their call and fulfil his or her duty. And he was rightly accorded with the title "pioneer and forerunner" and "model" in the work of the "lay apostolate". The Union of Catholic Apostolate is a direct expression of this vision of St Vincent Pallotti, that every member of the People of God is called to play their part in the mission and apostolate of the Church.

**Sahaya Anand Clement sac – Kuleuven – BELGIUM**

**13.05.12**

**[anandsahaya@gmail.com](mailto:anandsahaya@gmail.com)**

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