

Isabel Capeloa Gil

Discurso Uniservitate (29-10-2021)

Eminência Reverendíssima, Sr. D. Manuel Clemente, Magno Chanceler da UCP,  
Excelência Reverendíssima, D. José de Ornelas, Presidente da Conferência Episcopal Portuguesa,  
Cara Nieves Tapia,  
Dear Richard Brosse,  
Caros participantes neste congresso de Aprendizagem em serviço

Começo por cumprimentar Sr. D. Manuel Clemente, Magno Chanceler da UCP, dizendo-lhe que é para nós uma enorme honra contar com a sua palavra e presença fraterna neste importante colóquio da Uniservitate, inspirado largamente na interpelação que o Santo Padre nos faz de contribuirmos com um novo e grande pacto global para a capacitação da educação e a sua articulação com a espiritualidade.

Caros amigos e amigas. É um verdadeiro prazer para a Universidade Católica Portuguesa, organizar em colaboração com a CLAYSS, este segundo simpósio global Uniservitate, subordinado ao tema “Service-learning, integral education and transformative spirituality”. Num mundo desafiante, como aquele em que vivemos, a educação é determinante para a construção de um futuro sustentável e resiliente, sobretudo para convocar para um projeto de transformação e elevação os protagonistas do mundo a vir, os jovens.

Num tempo de explosão de novos e contraditórios protagonistas, esta convocação significa reclamar o direito a fazer diferente, significa encontrar uma proposta de valor que não decorra da reação às tendências ou às necessidades de curto prazo, mas que antecipe as grandes mudanças sociais e não deixe ninguém para trás. Uma educação que forme os protagonistas do futuro deve também incentivar ao risco, porque educar e aprender é inexoravelmente um ato arriscado, como refere o Papa Francisco. Para se ser protagonista é necessário saber falhar, refazer e recomeçar. Ser protagonista não significa exclusivamente reclamar o papel principal. Na verdade, se olharmos para a origem da expressão, que congrega o prefixo grego *prótos*, que significa primeiro, e *agonistes*, formado a partir do étimo *agon*, luta, combate; verificamos que protagonista é o lutador que faz o primeiro combate, o que ousa levar a ação avante. Protagonista será o mobilizador, quem abre caminho, de forma resiliente, combativa, inovadora.

Dear friends,

In view of a convocation to provide quality education in the service of the common good, service learning is arguably an approach that truly embodies the call for what Pope Francis in

the audience to the Diplomatic Corps accredited at the Holy See on Jan. 9 2020, refers to as “an educational vision that can encompass a broad range of life experiences and learning processes, in order to enable young people, individually and collectively, to develop their personalities. Education is not limited to school and university classrooms; it is principally ensured by strengthening and reinforcing the primary right of the family to educate, and the right of Churches and social communities to support and assist families in raising their children” An education that steps outside the academic realm, that plunges into the murky and complex social reality of different communities is a challenge that Catholic institutions must embrace if they are to fulfill a mandate for a practice that is centered on the integral development of the person and one that truly reacts and works to solve the complex problems of our times.

Following the demands of Pope Francis for a Church that goes forth, Catholic higher education must fulfill its mission of going forth, acting collaboratively to further the advancement of knowledge for the common good, to provide high quality teaching articulated with the needs of society aimed at transforming potential – which is the matter our students are made of – into astute, creative and ethical professionals.

Here at Universidade Católica Portuguesa, we are committed to a curriculum transformation developed with the support of Porticus to implement service learning across the whole of the university. The project Caps - Catholic University and Service Learning: Innovation and Social Responsibility is aimed at institutionalizing the service learning methodology, valuing the active participation of students in community activities and experiences across a wide range of areas fostering as well an integration of communal work with the SDG’s. ranging from the degree in Psychology to Management and PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics), students are encouraged to develop for credit social impact projects. The practice may be effectively understood as a micro covenant between academia and society, inspiring generations of students, faculty and staff to act in the spirit of Him, ‘who went forth and did good.’

The alignment of purpose between Service learning and the SDG goals adopted by the United Nations is clearly expressed in the very generous message that the Secretary general of the United Nations, His Excellency António Guterres, has conveyed to this Assembly and that I shall have the honor of reading next. But before I do, I wish to thank the partnership with CLAYSS that made this symposium possible – particularly Nieves and Maria Rosa Tapia – the

generous support of Porticus and the support of the International Federation of Catholic Universities, IFCU. A special word to the team at Católica that made this possible. And to all the participants, may this be an occasion for an insightful and fruitful dialogue with a community of purpose, to foster and develop quality education throughout the globe and to empower new protagonists for the common good.