

A BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CAMPUS  
MINISTRY IN THE CONTEXT OF A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY IN THE  
PHILIPPINES: TOWARDS DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY FOR CAMPUS  
MINISTRY

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## Abstract

Campus ministry has been a part of the effort of Christian universities to promote Christianity and to instill Christian values and character among the constituents of the university. In the course of time, and in the present age of globalization, Christian universities in Asia and the Philippines in particular give more emphasis on academic excellence at the expense of the Christian vision for holistic and meaningful education. Thus, there seems to be a widening gap between faith and science as Christian universities are pressured by the standards of globalization. In this respect, this study aims at revisiting the nature and mission of the church and rediscover the church's varied ministries in relation to campus ministry and to recover the dynamic relations between the church and campus ministry. Looking at the nature and mission of the church in relation to campus ministry, an analysis is made to understand the role of campus ministry as it assists the Christian university in realizing its Christian vision and in balancing the focus on faith and science to ensure total development of the university's

constituents. In line with the analysis and understanding on campus ministry in relation to the church, the community and the university, an attempt is made to formulate a relevant theology of campus ministry that would serve as a framework in campus ministry.

This study uses the descriptive and analytical method taking into consideration the biblical-theological reflection based on Christian faith as testified in the Bible and on the history and situation in Asia and the Philippines.

An assessment of Christian universities shows that the concept of universities, which was established in Europe during the medieval period, were brought by Western missionaries to Asia especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The purpose of these universities were to train leaders based on the Christian faith. But this universities, patterned after American universities were not only training leaders but also converting local people to Christianity. There were many attempts to reorient the direction of the universities to serve their constituents better. However, the era of globalization has pressured most universities to shift gears to pave the way to science and information technology. The focus on science has lessen the

formation of Christian values. Pluralism, multi-culture, multi-religious dimensions have been opened and the tendency for isolationist weakened. Yet, campus ministry has a great tendency to work on the usual business of targeting other religion for Christian conversion. This goes to say that Christianity is seen as superior than other religions. There is a need then for campus ministry to reinterpret gospel so that it will be more effective in supporting the Christian university in its mission of balancing faith and science for total development of persons not things, and service people rather than things and personal interests as goal.

Campus ministry in Asian and Philippine context is by and large patterned after the local church. Campus ministry is managed by chaplains, usually representing the denomination to which the university belongs. Campus ministry activities are usually limited to religious, sacramental, and liturgical exercises. To some extent, these religious activities limits the horizons of total development of life

This study has attempted to revisit the nature and mission of the church. The church is a fellowship and organized band of Christians who seriously follow the mission of Jesus - to love God and to love neighbors as

one's self. The nature of the church is more inclusive and hopes to relate to others in a loving way so that renewal and salvation for all may take place. It is expected that members of the Christian church should help each other in the work towards growth and maturity and in sharing their things and their lives to others. From this general understanding of the nature and mission of the church, the dynamics of campus ministry is situated.

Campus ministry is making Christ alive and visible in campus through the proclamation of the Word, education, nurture, caring and sharing, that every individual and the whole community may become living witnesses of God's saving acts in history. Campus ministry should be a part of that visible sign of God's presence in celebrating and exploring the incarnation in thought, word and deed. It is different from the local church in context, methodologies and approaches, and in many other respects it has similarity with the church such as participating in the mission of making life meaningful and abundant. Campus ministry, however, assists in transforming and empowering persons but not inviting these persons to become members of a local church. Thus, campus ministry which adheres to the

principles of 1) being and doing; 2) inclusive ministry; 3) social relevance; and, 4) participatory leadership is enabling the constituents of the university to become who and what they are and empowering them to become better members of their religions, communities and families.

Taking into consideration the dynamics of the church and campus ministry, this study has attempted to formulate a relevant theology of campus ministry. This theology to be functional and relevant should pay particular attention to the three dimensional relations of God, man and nature. A meaningful and abundant life is anchored in 1) man's relations with the God, the higher being; 2) man's relation to others; and 3) man's relation to nature. A theology of campus ministry should develop a spirituality that would strengthen this three dimensions of life by opening venues towards participatory leadership, self-criticism, interfaith dialogue, wherein participants can share their faith resources and take others' faith resources, thereby enriching one another.

This study recommends that campus ministry should 1) undertake a serious study on the context of the university where it operates. This context includes the

socio-economic, religious, cultural, social, and political situation of its constituents. From this study, a comprehensive plan, say 10 to 20 years, can be based. 2) Open a venue for dialogue and interfaith discussions to be participated by students, churches, communities and other religions. This dialogue will certainly produce information and faith experiences which can be incorporated in the comprehensive plan of campus ministry.

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