

Christianity in the Philippines: UST's Contribution to Bioethics

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Abstract: In my reflection entitled Christianity in the Philippines: UST'S Contribution to Bioethics, I focused on four major points. First, the iter or journey of bioethics in the University of Santo Tomas (UST), Manila. Second, the grounding reasons for bioethics in the University's Faculties of Theology and of Medicine and Surgery, and the future of Bioethics from a theological point of view. Third, the curricular offerings of the UST Faculties of Theology and Medicine and Surgery in Bioethics. Fourth, the need of bioethics for everyone. I reflected on bioethics from an ethical and theological perspective – from reason and faith.

Keywords: Bioethics, Christianity in the Philippines, University of Santo Tomas, Theology and Bioethics

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Introduction

This paper begins with what was fondly known in my student-days as (in Latin) *Explicatio terminorum* (i.e. explanation of terms): of the terms used in the title, namely, Christianity in the Philippines, UST's contribution to evangelization and to bioethics, and an operational description of bioethics.

Christianity in the Philippines

The Philippine Church, led by our pastors, our bishops, and by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), celebrated the 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines with the theme: "Gifted to Give" (cf. Mt 10:8) in 2021. With many others, the Dominicans in general (since 1587), and the University of Santo Tomas in particular (since 1611), have contributed significantly to Christianity in the Philippines - to evangelization.

The Dominicans arrived in Manila on July 22, 1587, which is the year of foundation of the Dominican missionary Province of Our Lady of the Rosary. Thereafter, and with others, they implanted the Church in many parts of Luzon and the Batanes and Babuyan islands, and later ministered in the Visayas and Mindanao. Until today, the Dominicans – from the Province of the Philippines and the Vicariate of Our Lady of the Rosary - continue to minister as educators, preachers, theologians, and pastors. In this context, it is important to highlight that the Philippine Dominican Province, born on December 8, 1971, is also celebrating its Golden Anniversary in 2021.

In the illustration of the logo for the celebration of 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines, there are, with the cross, the beads of the Rosary which is a devotion dear to Filipino Catholics from the beginning of evangelization. The Rosary was founded in part by our Father St. Dominic and spread throughout the world relatively by our Dominican brothers and sisters, including in the Philippines, "pueblo amante de Maria." By the way, the Dominican Family is celebrating this year the 800th Anniversary of the death of our dear Founder and Father St. Dominic de Guzman.

UST's Contribution to Evangelization and Bioethics

Since its foundation in 1578, the first Dominican Missionaries from the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary ministered through the pastoral apostolate in

the whole Luzon and through the educational apostolate, in which UST (with the College of San Juan de Letran), is an outstanding example and model of service throughout 410 years.

From its establishment in 1611, the UST Faculties of Philosophy and Theology have educated and formed seminarians, priests, and religious – and currently also lay men and women. UST continues to be attentive and responsive to the religious and educational needs of our people and of society at large. The teaching of philosophical and theological ethics, spearheaded by the Faculties of Philosophy and Theology, continues to be of primary importance to the University of Santo Tomas.

It is important to note that I intentionally did not give comments on courses of Bioethics in other faculties and colleges of the University of Santo Tomas, but the ethics of health care is also very significant in the UST College of Nursing, the UST College of Rehabilitation Sciences, and the UST Graduate School.

Likewise, from its foundation in 1871, the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery continues to excel in its formation of physicians, in their integral education that includes the teaching of ethics and health care ethics. Another important UST event in 2021 is the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, a leading institution in the development of medical ethics and bioethics in the Church and in Philippine society.

Through the teachers of the UST Department of Bioethics, the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery pioneered the promotion and development of bioethics in the Philippines. Moreover, other medical colleges and schools of medicine have adopted the curricular offerings of the Department of Bioethics and the UST Hospital Bioethics and Research committees and its different ethical guidelines for medical practice.

Description of Bioethics

Bioethics is the normative science of the ethics of life. It faces the nature, problems, conflicts, and concerns of human life from conception to death and in-between. In Christian perspective, we speak of bioethics and argue from reason and faith. Etymologically, bioethics (bios: life; ethics: ethics) means life-ethics, or ethics of the life sciences. It refers mainly not to a technical science (biology), but to a normative science (ethics) that studies moral principles, values and virtues, norms, and practices concerning biomedical interventions on human life.

It has been said that bioethics is not “a fundamentally new ethics, but the application of ethics and its basic principles to the new possibilities opened up to us by modern biology and biotechnology with regard to human life.”¹ And yet, while focusing on healthcare ethics, bioethics today goes beyond it to encompass scientific ethics, including robotic ethics, social, business, and ecological ethics.

How has bioethics, or life ethics, evolved at the University of Santo Tomas? This question is answered in the first part of my talk: historical highlights of the development of Bioethics in UST.

Bioethics in UST: Historical Highlights

I begin with the journey speaking (1) of the global development of bioethics in general and continue with (2) the development of bioethics in the Philippines and in the University of Santo Tomas, particularly in the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery and the Faculty of Theology.

Global Development of Bioethics

It is said that Medicine has advanced more in the 20th century than in all the preceding centuries taken together. The development of biomedicine goes on even at a faster pace in the 21st century. This “invasion” of medicine – of biomedical technology – has touched positively all men of different races. However, the patient needed to be defended from this invasion: his/her dignity and rights, life and freedom, autonomy, and justice. The continuing concern is to ensure that what can be done biotechnologically should be done ethically and theologically. In trying to answer this and other related essential questions on human life, bioethics was born.

Needless to say, ethics has accompanied men and women from the beginning of history: in the health sciences, as in all other professions, certain actions were considered good and to be done, and other actions were deemed evil and to be avoided. In health care ethics, the journey began properly with Hippocrates five centuries before Christ. Before the appearance of bioethics as a normative science, its seeds were sown in the United Nations' (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the 1948 Code of Nuremberg, and the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki.

The more specific steps of Bioethics were delineated in the 1978 Belmont Report of the USA National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects

¹ Josef Fuchs, *Christian Morality: The Word Became Flesh* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1987), 190.

of Biomedical and Behavioral Sciences, which gave significant importance to ethical principles specifically to respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. From this Report developed dynamically the main publication – like the bible of Bioethics for a long time – *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* by Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, where the authors added the principle of non-maleficence and unfortunately changed the respect for persons to autonomy. The principlist approach is still rather predominant in bioethics, although other approaches or ethical theories are gaining ground, such as the deontological, personalist, virtue, and care approaches. From a humanist and Christian perspective, virtue ethics, often tied up with ethics of principles, has become most attractive.

Other highlights of the historical development of bioethics include the World Health Organization (WHO, 2000), Operational Guidelines for Ethics Committees that Review Biomedical Research. These guidelines underscore the care and protection of research participants and of confidentiality, the informed consent process, and the impact of research in the local community. Other important texts are UNESCO's Declaration of Human Genome and Human Rights (1997), the International Declaration of Human Genetic Data (2003), and the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (2005). In this important Declaration we read: human dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms are to be fully respected (Art. 3, no. 1); the interest and welfare of the individual should have priority over the interest of science and society (Art. 3, no. 2), and independent multidisciplinary and pluralist ethics should be established, promoted, and supported (Art. 19). The European Union has also issued some important documents on the matter.

By the middle of the 20th century, biology, medicine, and biotechnology were advancing rapidly while ethics seemed to lag. R. van Potter, an oncologist, called attention to this gap and proposed a new kind of ethics that he called Bioethics, or the bridge between scientific development and the humanities. Thus, the term bioethics was born in 1971. In his trailblazing article, "The Science of Survival," Potter wanted that the new science of bioethics be the bridge between a scientific/biological culture and a humanist/ethical culture.²

From its first steps in the United States of America, Bioethics spread quickly throughout the world, especially in the developed world. Today there are numberless centers of bioethics worldwide, and a great number of journals and

² Van Rensselaer Potter, *Bioethics: Bridge to the Future* (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1971); Van Rensselaer Potter, *Bioethics: Bridge to the Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

books on bioethical issues are being published annually. The great majority of of medical and nursing schools offer bioethics in their curricular programs, and bioethics education is emerging as a subject in the sciences and humanities courses of many colleges, postgraduate studies, and even high schools. Moreover, a growing number of countries throughout the world has established a National Commission of Bioethics. The International Association of Bioethics was established in 1982.

With bioethics, and directly connected with it, two other essential bodies have developed, namely, Hospital Bioethics Committees and Research Bioethics Committees. Hospital Bioethics Committees have three main objectives: to educate health care personnel and the public at large; to draft policies/guidelines on difficult medical/moral cases; and to be open for consultation to healthcare providers, patients and their families. Research Bioethics Committees, on the other hand, are charged with the evaluation/approval of research protocols involving human subjects and animals. In 2021, the scientific question is, was the research on and production of the anti-Covid-19 vaccines done scientifically and was according to the strict protocols? A follow-up question is: assuming that the vaccines were obtained according to scientific protocol, are its origins and process ethically good?³

It is important to note that bioethics continues to be dominated by the United States of America, with the growing influence of Europe. In fact, there is not one Western Bioethics: while the North American Bioethics (although Canada is also close to Europe) is permeated, in general, by a highly individualistic, utilitarian, and pragmatic mentality, European Bioethics – rooted in and developed from a “Judeo-Christian tradition” – is generally distinguished by a deeply rationalist and conceptual approach. Thus, for instance, while the North American and Anglo-Saxon worlds give primary importance to the principle of autonomy, the European world, especially the Mediterranean, stresses the principle of justice (and of solidarity).

Development of Bioethics at the University of Santo Tomas

Concerning the development of Bioethics in the Philippines, we must affirm that even before the word was coined in 1971, the schools of Medicine and Nursing in the Philippines – as in other countries in the world - were offering to their respective students the course of Medical or Nursing Deontology and, later, Medical or Nursing Ethics.

By the late '80s, the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery of the University of

³ Cf. Fausto B. Gomez OP, *Bioethics: Ethics of Life* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2021), 260-272.

Santo Tomas was teaching Health Ethics or Bioethics. Bioethics then was preferred to Medical Ethics with the intention of initiating and spreading the recently coined term Bioethics in professional ethics and more concretely in the health care professions. Moreover, the term Bioethics wanted to underline the primacy of human life in the practice of medicine and health ethics.

Up to 1991, the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery (FMS) had an Office of Medical Ethics. In November 1991, the team of Medical Ethics teachers led by the Regent of the Faculty was able to obtain the approval of the UST Council of Regents and of the UST Academic Senate to replace the Office of Medical Ethics by the Department of Bioethics. The team was deeply convinced of this: to argue convincingly the significance of ethics in UST, the Catholic University of the Philippines, there is a need to become a department like the other medical specialties. Thus, the Department of Bioethics was born and thereafter (in 1992) the corresponding Division of Bioethics of the Santo Tomas University Hospital (STUH), and the Research Committee whose main work was to study and approve the research protocols of our doctors. From 1992 on, the yearly postgraduate course in Bioethics, organized by the FMS Department of Bioethics, was held. Since 1993, and for nine successive years, this Department of Bioethics has published a yearly Forum in Bioethics, which printed the proceedings of its annual Postgraduate Course in Bioethics.⁴ By the way, the Department of Bioethics of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery of the University of Santo Tomas is the first Department of Bioethics in the Philippines.

Today several medical schools offer Bioethics as a course to their students and many hospitals in the Philippines have organized Hospital Bioethics Committees. The Philippine Council for Health Research and Development, connected with the Department of Science and Technology, has organized the National Ethics Committee.

Earlier, in 1988, the Southeast Asian Center for Bioethics (SEACB) was founded in Manila, under the sponsorship of the International Federation of Catholic Universities and the University of Santo Tomas. Dr. Angeles Tan-Alora,

⁴ See UST Department of Bioethics, ed., *Forum in Bioethics 1: Bioethics, A Growing Concern* (Manila: UST Department of Bioethics, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, 1994); *Forum in Bioethics 2: Special Issue in Bioethics* (*Unitas*, Vol. 68, No. 2, June 1995); *Forum in Bioethics 3: Relevant Issues in Healthcare* (Manila: UST Department of Bioethics, 1996); *Forum in Bioethics 4: Bioethics, The Journey Continues* (*Ib.*, 1997); *Forum in Bioethics 5: Conscience, Cooperation, Compassion* (*Ib.* 1998); *Forum in Bioethics 6: The Impact of High Technology on Health Care* (*Ib.*, 1999); *Forum in Bioethics 7: Love/Life making, Confidentiality, Xenotransplants, Aging*; *Forum in Bioethics 8: Justice, Patients' Rights, Psycho Ethics* (*Ib.* 2001); *Forum in Bioethics 9: Current Practical Issues in Bioethics* (*Ib.* 2002).

MD, an outstanding bioethicist in the Philippines, led, since its foundation, in the Southeast Asian Center for Bioethics. This is how she describes the development of the SEACB and its widening impact:

In the early 1980s, Dr. Vicente Rosales, urged by then UST Rector Leonardo Legaspi OP, formed a group of 5 doctors from the University of Santo Tomas (UST) and the University of the Philippines (UP). We met once a month to discuss an article in Bioethics, then a growing discipline. A few years later, in 1988, again upon the instigation of Rector Legaspi, and with the important help of Dr. H Tristram Engelhardt Jr., who had patiently tutored us [a group of teachers of bioethics] for 4 years... On its board were 4 priests, 3 doctors, one nurse, one social worker and one lawyer... For 30 years, the SEACB held discussions and training programs, did research and published 3 casebooks and a monthly Newsletter in Bioethics. We also participated in international meetings providing a voice beyond Western Bioethics.⁵

On February 6, 1999, under the leadership of the Department of Bioethics of the UST FMS and the SEACB, the Bioethics Society of the Philippines (BSP) was launched at the end of the 7th Postgraduate Course in Bioethics of said Department.

Two other associations that played dynamic roles in sensitizing the healthcare professions and the public at large on bioethical issues are the UST Medical Alumni Association (USTMAA) and the Catholic Physicians' Guild of the Philippines (CPGP). CPGP was founded in the FMS by Fr. Francisco del Rio OP, an outstanding moralist and then Regent of FMS and Thomasian Dr. Jose Maria Delgado - with other physicians from UST, the University of the Philippines (UP) and the Afable Medical School (later the Manila Central University, MCU). From its beginning up to the present, CPGP continued to be deeply connected with FMS: many of its members are UST alumni, and the Regent of the Faculty has been from its foundation the Ecclesiastical Adviser. With the continuing contribution of FMS and with USTMAA, CPGP organized many seminars, modules, and lectures throughout the Philippines, promoting Bioethics and the Gospel of Life.

⁵ Angeles Tan Alora MD, "Foreword," *Bioethics: Ethics of Life* by F. B. Gomez (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2021), xv. Cf. Angeles Tan Alora MD and J. M. Lumitao MD, Eds., *Beyond a Western Bioethics: Voices from the Developing World* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2001); Angeles Tan-Alora MD, *Ethical Guidelines for Medical Practice*, no. 2 (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2013); UST Hospital Bioethics Committee, ed., *Ethical Guidelines for Medical Practice*, no. 1 (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2001).

Beside the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, the UST Faculty of Sacred Theology has been teaching to its candidates for master's and doctorate degrees in Pastoral Theology a course, Health Care Ministry, which analyzed from the perspective of pastoral theology, medical problems in a hospital setting. In the 1990s, the Faculty of Theology offers a 2-unit course in Bioethics to the candidates for the Bachelor's Degree in Theology. An important component of the Faculty of Theology is then called Sisters' Institute for Theological Formation (SITF), which continues offering (with the title of Institute of Theological Formation and thus open to all) a course in Bioethics. Additionally, professors from the UST Faculty of Theology continue teaching at the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery and at the UST Graduate School, which also offers with the Faculty of Theology a licentiate/master's degree in bioethics.

Let me mention two more facts related to Bioethics in the Philippines. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has an Office of Bioethics. Its Bioethics Council was composed by a majority of members from UST. This office with the assistance of the UST Department of Bioethics and the UST Faculty of Theology organized a Conference in Bioethics, Bioethics in the Local Church for all the bishops of the Philippines on January 21, 1997.

A second fact to point out is the international congress of bioethics organized by UST. On December 5-7, 2005, the University of Santo Tomas organized and successfully held an International Congress on Bioethics titled "Celebrating the Gospel of Life: Basic Issues in Bioethics." The three-day conference, enlightened by Philippine and international bioethicists, was attended by more than three hundred (300) participants from the Philippines and abroad. It was also sponsored by the Office of Bioethics of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines and the Vatican Pontifical Academy for Life (PAV). The Proceedings of the International Conference were subsequently published by the University of Santo Tomas.⁶

Theological Bioethics: Theology's Voice in Bioethics

In the second part of my reflection, I delineated the reasons for the study of Bioethics in a Catholic school like UST, the Catholic University of the Philippines. Here are the importance of bioethics in Christian faith: (1) in the Catholic Tradition, (2) in the magisterium of the Church and in theological ethics.

⁶ Cf. Fausto B. Gomez, OP, Ed., *Celebrating the Gospel of Life. Basic Issues in Bioethics* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2006).

Theological bioethics is bioethics in the perspective of faith, in our case, of Christian faith. It is considered a part of moral theology, or of Christian ethics.⁷

One of the gurus of Bioethics, Tristram Engelhardt, writes: “Bioethics, where it succeeds, shows where it does not need theology.”⁸ Is theology an obstacle to modern Bioethics? Let us try to answer the question as we consider the second point of our discourse, that is, Theological Bioethics. Theological Bioethics is bioethics – a relatively autonomous normative science, like ethics - and theology, or bioethics in human and religious/Christian perspective. It argues from reason and faith, that is, philosophically and theologically.

John Paul II writes in *Fides et Ratio*: “faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”⁹ Let me give an example. Why is abortion immoral? From the human perspective, ethically, because it is utterly against the fundamental right to life of every human being. Theologically, because it is against the primary right of life and because the unborn child is a son or daughter of God, who is the Lord of Life and death, from the moment of conception, etc.: life is sacred.

Religion professor Allen D. Verhey narrated the following story.¹⁰ Once his son asked him “what it was he did.” The father answered that he was “a teacher and a theologian.” His son could understand “teacher,” but was puzzled by the word “theologian.” So, the son asked: “What do theologians do?” The father responded: “They talk of God.” This time the word “talk” puzzled the son, who asked: “They talk of God, with whom?” With whom do theologians talk of God, of faith in bioethics? Should they really talk of God? Historically, moral theology has contributed much to the understanding and development of pastoral medicine, and medical and nursing ethics. Even in the '70s, at the onset of bioethics, theologians did many of the writings on life-ethics.

⁷ The first edition of this part (2) was originally published in *Philippiniana Sacra*, Vol. XXXV, N. 105 (September-December, 2000): 459-484. This is the second edition - updated and enlarged.

⁸ Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., “Looking for God and Feeling the Abyss: Bioethics and Natural Theology,” in *Theology and Bioethics: Exploring the Foundations and Frontiers*, Ed., Earl E. Shelp (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1985), 88, quoted by Courtney S. Campbell, “Religion and Moral Meaning in Bioethics,” *Hastings Center Report: A Special Supplement on Theology, Religious Tradition, and Bioethics* (July-August, 1990): 5.

⁹ John Paul II, *Encyclical letter Fides et Ratio on the Relationship between Faith and Reason* (The Vatican, September 14, 1998), first paragraph.

¹⁰ Cf. Allen D. Verhey, “Talking of God: But with Whom?” *Hastings Center Report*, vol. 20, no. 4 (Jul. - Aug. 1990): 21-24.

Theological Bioethics is, as we said, bioethics in Christian perspective. In the context of theological ethics, the mystery of salvation has a particular impact, including the following faith-realities: creation, incarnation, redemption, resurrection, Pentecost, heaven. Among the bioethical principles, it emphasized human dignity and rights, stewardship, truth, informed consent, solidarity and fraternity, and the preferential love for the poor and needy. Regarding the virtues, we speak of the theological virtues and of the primacy of charity and compassion, of humility, of obedience, and of prayerfulness, and the significance of the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Regarding ideologies, we confront individualism, collectivism, relativism, nihilism, gender ideology, etc.

The Catholic Tradition

Among Christian traditions, the Catholic tradition has been generally acknowledged as a well-developed tradition on medical and theological ethics. I just point out here a few significant teachings.

The Fathers of the Church (1-8 centuries) defended human dignity, justice, solidarity, and fraternity, sharing with the poor out of justice and charity, and defended the right to life of all, particularly of the unborn children. Just two examples. We read in the Letter to Diognetus (c.130): “Like others, the Christians marry and have children, but they do not dispose of the children thus conceived.” Following the famous dictum of Tertullian (155-220), “A man who will be a man is already a man,” John Paul II asked: “How could a human individual not be a human person?”¹¹

The principal theologians in the Catholic tradition are Saint Augustine (354-430) who built the Christian doctrine on sexuality (with its lights and shadows), and taught that Christians should not commit suicide to avoid suffering, and Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who harmonized splendidly reason and faith, philosophy and theology. The Angelic Doctor saw no possible contradiction between reason and faith, between philosophy and theology, for both come from God: “Whatever its source, truth is of the Holy Spirit.”¹² Faith is not afraid of reason but builds upon it and perfects it in the constant search for truth, including moral truth.

¹¹ *Letter to Diognetus*, ch.5, 5; Tertullian, *Apology*, or *Apologeticum*, IX, 8; John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), 60). Cf. Fausto Gomez OP, “The Church, Pope Francis on Abortion,” *O Clarim, Macau Catholic Weekly*, (March 17 and 24, 2017).

¹² *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, 109, 1, ad 1.

Saint Antoninus of Florence (1389-1459) told physicians of their obligation to tell the dying person of the imminence of his death. Theologians Domingo de Soto and Domingo Bañez (16th century) explained creatively the distinction between ordinary (obligatory) and extraordinary (optional) means of treatment - a distinction contributed to bioethics by Christian theology. Through the 19th century, theologians developed pastoral medicine and in the 20th century Medical Deontology, Medical Ethics, and Bioethics.¹³

Although at its formal beginnings, Bioethics was done also by theologians, by the late '70s theology as theology, became almost silent, and God-talk were sidelined, if not rejected. May we speak today of theological bioethics? Certainly, yes!

Christian theologians do not agree regarding the teaching of Bioethics in Theology. Some of them de-emphasize theology to the point that they seem to be doing exclusively bioethics from a philosophical perspective. Representatives of this stand are Protestants Joseph Fletcher, and Catholics Richard McCormick, Charles Curran, and Marciano Vidal.¹⁴ On the other hand, other Christian theologians while respecting the autonomy of bioethics also respect theology. Thus, when discussing bioethical problems, they present philosophical and theological arguments – philosophical arguments confirmed by faith. Representatives of this way of doing theological bioethics are Stanley Hauerwas, Benedict Ashley, Kevin O'Rourke, Niceto Blázquez, Edmund Pellegrino, Elio Sgreccia, and Anthony Fisher.¹⁵

We could say that the two tasks of theological bioethics are: one, explicitly theological and implicitly philosophical, when speaking of bioethical issues and concerns within the community of faith or the Church; two, explicitly philosophical and implicitly theological, when talking of life-ethics without the Christian community, that is, in the public arena.

¹³ Cf. Charles E. Curran, "Roman Catholicism," *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, vol. 4, ed. Warren T. Reich (New York: Simon & Schuster/Macmillan, 1995), 2321-2331.

¹⁴ Cf. Marciano Vidal, *Moral de la Persona y Bioética Teológica. Moral de Actitudes: II* (Madrid: PS Ed., 1991).

¹⁵ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Character of Virtue: Letters to a Godson* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018); Benedict Ashley and Kevin O'Rourke, *Health Care Ethics: A Theological Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1997); Niceto Blázquez, *Bioética fundamental* (Madrid: BAC, 1996); Id. "Epistemología de la Bioética," *Studium*, Vol. XXXVIII/1 (1998), 1-34; Edmund D. Pellegrino, M.D., "Science and Theology: From a Medical Perspective," *Linacre Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (November 1990). 19-35; Elio Sgreccia, *Manual de Bioética* (Mexico: Universidad Anahuac, Diana, 1996); Anthony Fisher, *Catholic Bioethics for a New Millennium* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

In the public areopagus of the global village, theologians approach bioethical issues principally but not exclusively philosophically, that is, from the viewpoint of our humanity as known by human reason, a knowledge rooted in natural law, or the law of being human, and centered on human dignity and rights, planetary ethical principles and virtues, and minimal universal ethical standards. We add “principally but not exclusively,” because faith – and therefore, theology as “God’s talk” - has also a specific word to say but using a common language and respectful persuasive arguments. However, it is important for us theologians to tell our audience or our readers whether we are talking on a human level or on a Christian level.

It is not rare to meet persons who would tell me: “You have Bioethics in the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, because UST is a Catholic University.” Or, you are against surrogate motherhood because you are a Catholic priest.” I tell them: “Yes, UST is the Catholic University of the Philippines; but we study bioethics because it is a necessary subject for any college of medicine; of course, we confirm our philosophical arguments with the teachings of Christian faith, but always respecting the faith and conscience of others.”

Preaching at the areopagus of the world, theologians are asked by their humanity and their faith to speak prophetically by denouncing courageously dehumanizing biomedical interventions on human life, for instance when embryos are produced for research and experimentation only, or when prenatal diagnosis is done with the intention of terminating the life of the diseased unborn child, or a life-sustaining treatment is not provided because the patient is poor or too old or disabled.

Theologians ought to talk prophetically - and thus not caring about being “politically correct” - by proclaiming love of neighbor and respect for creation, by announcing the ethical principles of stewardship, totality, double effect, cooperation, freedom and responsibility, the “lesser evil” ... and above all, charity. As Christian believers, they must be on the side of the poor and marginalized, the defenseless human beings. Moreover, our faith and our Church encourage us to donate our organs when they can be medically and ethically donated.

According to John Paul II, theologians have a significant role to play in bioethics. The Polish Pope asked them to contribute positively to the dialogue between faith and science, to the deepening of the ontological and anthropological

roots of bioethics, to the necessary link between freedom and truth, between being and acting,¹⁶ between freedom and responsibility.

The Magisterium of the Church

Theologians' role is to unfold and explain to the members of their own community of faith – and to others who want to listen – the Gospel of bioethics, which is part of the Gospel of Christ. Theology proceeds from the sources of revelation – the Sacred Scriptures and Tradition – and considers the Magisterium, or teaching of the Church, which interprets officially and with authority the doctrines of Christian revelation.

An important role of moral theologians involved in bioethics is to present and explain within and outside the Church the teaching of the Church on various bioethical issues. Contrary to the opinion of some theologians, we maintain that the teaching of the Church in bioethics is not at all an obstacle to the current bioethical debate, but a needed voice to defend life, faith, human dignity, and equal rights of all human beings, above all, of the defenseless voiceless, the unborn children, the abandoned elderly, the poor, and the disadvantaged.

Through her teachings and praxis, the Church has contributed by and large to the humanization of society, to the socialization of medicine, to a personalist bioethics, and to the evangelization of cultures and societies.

From the second half of the 20th century, the Catholic Church has offered to her faithful and to all human beings some important texts on bioethics. Among others, the following: Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* (1968); the encyclicals *Evangelium Vitae*, or *The Gospel of Life* (1995) and *Veritatis Splendor* or *The Splendor of Truth* (1993) by John Paul II; Instruction *Donum Vitae* or *The Gift of Life, On Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation* (1987) by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), and Instruction *Dignitas Personae, On Certain Bioethical Questions* (2008), a follow-up and update of the previous Vatican Instruction by the same Congregation. Earlier, CDF had issued two other important statements, namely *Declaration on Procured Abortion* (1974) and *Declaration on Euthanasia* (1980). Lately, CDF has also come out with a note on the morality of using some anti-Covid-19 vaccines (Vatican, December 21, 2020).

¹⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *Address on Bioethics: Dialogue between the Church and Science*, February 17, 1996; in *L'Osservatore Romano* (February 23, 1996), 6.

The Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers issued the first Charter for Health Care Worker in 1994. Considering, on one hand, the rapid advances in science, biotechnology and biomedicine, and, on the other, the new documents on the matter from the magisterium of the Church, the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance issued in 2016 an excellent updated and expanded New Charter for Health Care Workers.

In 1995, St. John Paul II founded the Pontifical Academy for Life (PAV). This academy organizes every year an International Congress on Bioethics and Faith. It has come out with a good number of outstanding books on the different aspects of bioethics from a scientific, ethical, and theological perspective. Among the texts produced by the Pontifical Academy for Life, we mention three relevant ones: "Reflections on Cloning" (Vatican City 1997), "The Culture of Life: Foundations and Dimensions" (2001), and "Faith and Human Life" (2013). PAV collaborated with the Vatican Covid-19 Commission in a relevant minor text, namely, "Vaccines for all: 20 points for a fairer and healthier world" (Vatican, December 27, 2020).

There are outstanding summaries of the CCC and CSDC. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC, 1992, 1997) presents and answers different bioethical questions in its exposition of the commandments. In the Fifth Commandment, we are asked to respect the human person, created in the image of God, human dignity and rights that are equal in all persons, and human life, which is sacred, and a fundamental human right, from the moment of conception to natural death. We are taught on the ethics of scientific research and experimentation, prenatal diagnosis, abortion, euthanasia, suicide, organ transplant and donation, and the death penalty. In the Sixth Commandment, we are introduced to the meaning of sexuality, the need of chastity, and the ethics of family planning and population control. In the Eighth Commandment, the respect for truth is highlighted, including professional secrets. Other important teachings of the Catechism on Bioethics refer to the meaning of pain, suffering, and death, and to environmental ethics.¹⁷ Another basic Church document that deals engagingly with issues connected with human dignity and rights, life, work, the environment, etc. is *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004) by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

Besides the universal teachings of the Church, moral theologians felt the need to reflect on the particular bioethical teachings of the local churches. One of the

¹⁷In the final edition of CCC, 1997, the door to the death penalty was almost absolutely closed. In 1999, John Paul II said that the death penalty is cruel and unnecessary. In 2020, Pope Francis condemned capital punishment absolutely, and added this teaching to CCC. Cf. Fausto B. Gomez OP, *Bioethics: Ethics of Life* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2021), 129-140.

best bioethical documents from local churches is Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services issued by the USA National Conference of Catholic Bishops and renewed from time to time.¹⁸ In the Philippines, our Bishops have come up with some significant ethical statements, including the pastoral letter entitled: What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land? (1988). It is a Pastoral Letter on Ecology, which is the first episcopal pastoral letter in the world. In 2019, CBCP issued their latest Pastoral Letter on Climate Emergency. Another important bioethical document from our bishops is titled In the Compassion of Jesus, which is a Pastoral Letter on AIDS (1993). As we mentioned earlier, CBCP instituted an Office for Bioethics.¹⁹

Theology, therefore, has a necessary word to say on bioethics and, therefore, we ought to speak of theological bioethics. Theologians are tasked with the mission of proclaiming the Gospel of bioethics within and outside the Christian community. They must be present in the Church and in the public plazas of the world, in the technological mass media of communication as what they are, that is, as theologians. Even when they dialogue philosophically with other bioethicists, they do not park their faith at home or in the convent to speak the secular language (It is important to note that patients do not leave their faith when they go to a doctor or are confined in a hospital). They do not hide their faith but try to share it with others. As human beings and as believers in Christ, Catholics have a right to speak and an obligation to do so.

Will theologians be listened to when they talk of God? If theologians speak respectfully, humbly, truthfully, and compassionately, they will certainly be listened to! Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, St. Teresa of Kolkata, all the saints, speak to the world as Christians – and they were listened to; and how! Indeed, as Allen Verhey affirms, “To raise a theologically articulate voice in protest and in hope may be a sign of life in the culture and preserve a memory or stir an image that may make a difference.”²⁰

¹⁸ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Services*, 6th ed. (Washington D.C.: USCCB, 2018).

¹⁹ Cf. Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), *Pastoral Letter on Climate Emergency* (Manila, July 2019); *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: CBCP, 1997); *Letters and Statements, 1984-1990* (Manila, 1990); *Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, Acts and Decrees* (Manila, 1992).

²⁰ Allen D. Verhey, “Talking of God,” 21-24; cf. James P. Wind, “What Can Religion Offer Bioethics?” *Hastings Center Report: A Special Supplement*, vol. 20, no. 4 (July-August 1990): 18-20.

Theological Ethics and the Future of Bioethics

I close the second part of our reflection with a few words on the hopeful and perilous future of bioethics, a future that is already now. Christian ethics must face this future now.

At the beginning of the Third Millennium, I read an interesting article on the web. Its title is "Bioethics in the New Millennium" authored by C. Ben Mitchell from the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity.²¹

Mitchell re-affirms what others have said, that is, that the 21st Century will be the Biotech Century. Quoting Richard Oliver, Mitchell lists the following technologies:

- The ability to clone humans;
- Pre-determination of the sex of children and their genetic make-up;
- Pharmacogenomics, which directs and tailors drugs to the genetic make-up of individual patients;
- Genetically-derived therapies for the prevention and cure of most cancers, heart disease, AIDS, and other diseases, including new strains of vaccine-resistant ones such as malaria [we might add here the novel coronavirus Covid-19];
- The ability to “program” out of human genes the propensities to contract various diseases and illnesses;
- Repair of damaged brain cells, spinal cords, and other diseased or damaged human tissues;
- Animals that grow replacement organs for the 50 percent of humans who die before getting a transplant organ from a human donor; and
- A “smart mouse” that points the way to eliminating aging in humans.

²¹ Cf. <http://www.bioethics.org/newsletter/o11/011mitchell.htm>.

Technologies, indeed, can be—and generally are—truly helpful and progressive. Facing those complex problems, some basic questions emerge from ethics and theology! If it can be done technically, should it not also be done ethically? When must they be done? Will these expensive technologies increase discrimination and inequality among nations and peoples? From man to superman, to cyberman? From homo sapiens to homo deus to secular homo faber? Yesterday, the utopia of Adam and Eve, the Tower of Babel, today the continuing utopia of infinite progress, this-worldly perfect kingdom and happiness promised by communism and transhumanism have failed or will fail. Man is weak, human life is precarious and, as the novel pandemic has made clear again, total earthly happiness is another utopia, or a place nowhere to be found today or tomorrow. Without God the Creator, who is the director of the orchestra of his marvelous universe, all utopias and ideologies will continue producing – in greater or lesser degree - disharmony and division, and the promised total this-worldly happiness will continue to be elusive.

Other radical questions must be taken into consideration, if we want to have real human progress! What does it mean to be human? How bioethics may help us be ethical and do what is ethical in this third millennium? For believers, what does it mean to be created in God's image, icon of Christ and brother/sister to one another – to all? In this context, I am reminded of the words of Dostoyevsky: “Man cannot live without God.”

The goal of bioethics - of any ethics - is not merely to know but mainly to do: “To know and not to do is not yet to know” (Buddhist proverb). To do what? To do good – to be good! Peter Kreeft asks himself: “What is the purpose of ethics?” To answer: “To be good, that is, virtuous.”²² To be virtuous, that is above all, to be in love – with God, with ourselves, with others, with life, and with creation which is our common home.

“Why is the need for a Catholic identity in bioethics? Truth!”²³ And Love: love in truth, or truth in love. Jesus Christ is Love and Truth and, as it has been repeated, love without truth is blind, and truth without love is “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor 13:1). Therefore, truth in love or love in truth: *veritas in caritate*, or *caritas in veritate*.²⁴ Let us add that true love is the virtue that gives life

²² Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 30-31.

²³ John F. Morris, “Teaching Catholic Bioethics,” *Ethics & Medics*, vol. 25, n. 1 (January 2000): 2; cf. Juan María Clavel, “Estorba la teología en el debate bioético,” *Estudios Eclesiásticos*, 71 (1996): 261-275.

²⁴ Cf. St. Paul, 1 Cor 13:1; Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (2006) and *Caritas in Veritate* (2008).

and true value to all other virtues and presupposes and respects truth, justice, and freedom. Hence, without true love, which is the virtue of virtues, deeds have little or no value in the perspective of self-realization, of happiness, and of God's Kingdom.

Bioethics in the Faculty of Theology and in the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery

In the third part of my reflection, I briefly present Bioethics in the program of (1) the UST Faculty of Theology and (2) in the curriculum of the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery.

UST Faculty of Theology: Bioethics

The University of Santo Tomas was founded in 1611. It is called the Royal and Pontifical University and the Catholic University of the Philippines. The UST Faculty of Sacred Theology was, with philosophy, the first faculty of the university and therefore, it was founded in 1611. As a pontifical faculty, the UST Faculty of Theology includes – since the 1990s - basic bioethics in the first cycle of theological studies. In cooperation with the UST Graduate School, the Faculty of Theology offers an STL-MA in Bioethics, and a doctorate degree.

Ethics, also moral theology, may be dynamically defined as “The science of what man ought to be by reason of what he is” (A. Sertillanges). This human, and Christian, normative science was traditionally divided into General Ethics (or General, or Fundamental Moral Theology) and Special Ethics (or Special Moral Theology).²⁵

General Moral Theology studies the basic moral categories, such as end, human acts, morality, law, conscience, virtue, sin, and grace. Special Moral Theology takes up virtues in the concrete, the theological and the cardinal virtues. It is interesting to note that bioethics – secular bioethics, also considers virtue as a basic ethical category; there is, since the second half of the previous century, the theory of virtue ethics to approach the study of the whole matter of bioethics.

Currently, some moralists divide Special Moral Theology thus: Ethics of the Person, to include the study of interpersonal relationships, love and sexuality, and bioethics; Social Ethics, to consider economic, political and cultural structures, and social values such as human rights, justice, freedom, truthfulness and solidarity,

²⁵ Fausto B. Gomez, “General Remarks on Moral Theology,” *A Pilgrim's Notes: Ethics, Social Ethics and Bioethics* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2005), 3-14.

peace; and Professional Ethics, to develop the ethics of the different professions like Medical Ethics or Business Ethics.

Bioethics is life-ethics, and theology has much to say on the ethics of life and on the meaning of life, health, suffering and death. Bioethics is part of ethics and of moral theology. I remember the words of John Paul II: [In a Catholic university], “theology plays a particularly important role ... It serves all other disciplines in their search for meaning.”²⁶

We may divide theological bioethics into Basic Theological Bioethics and Special Theological Bioethics. While the former is taken up within the first cycle of theological studies leading to the bachelor’s in theology (STB), the latter, or Special Theological Bioethics, which may focus on different bioethical issues, is studied in the second and third cycles of theological studies, namely the licentiate/master’s and the doctorate in theology (STL/MA, STD).

Our main interest here is Basic Theological Bioethics. At present, there is a good number of textbooks on Theological Ethics.²⁷ Personally, I wish to propose the following topics for basic courses in Theological Bioethics.²⁸ I am thinking of a 2-unit (36 hours), or 3-unit (54 hours) course to be given during the second or third year of the first cycle – the cycle of basic theological studies.

For the sake of completion, I present the program of studies. By the way, the Faculty of Theology offers basic bioethics in the Institute of Theological Studies, earlier called the Sisters’ Institute of Theological Formation (SITF), which is a branch under the UST Faculty of Theology.

²⁶ John Paul II, *Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (Vatican City: 1990), no. 19.

²⁷ Benedict Ashley, O.P. and Kevin O’Rourke, O.P., *Health Care Ethics. A Theological Analysis*, 4th edition (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University, 1995); Benedict Ashley, O.P. and Kevin O’Rourke, O.P., *Ethics of Health Care* (Philippine Edition, 4th Printing: Manila, UST Department of Bioethics and UST Publishing House, 2001); Anthony Fisher, OP, *Catholic Bioethics for a New Millennium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); René T. Lagaya, SDB, Ed., *Making Life Beautiful* (Metro Manila: Makati Medical Center, Don Bosco Press 2008); Jerry Reb Manlangit, OP, *Fundamental Concepts, Principles and Issues in Bioethics*, Vol 1 and 2 (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2010); James McTavish, FMVD, *Choose Life! Theological reflections on Current Moral Issues*. (Quezon City: Verbum Dei Missionaries, 2012); Angeles Tan-Alora, MD. *Most Frequently Asked Bioethics Questions* (Quezon City: C & E Publishing, Inc., 2015).

²⁸ Cf. Fausto B. Gomez, O.P., *A Pilgrim’s Notes: Ethics, Social Ethics, Bioethics* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2005); Id., *The Journey Continues: Ethics and Bioethics* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2008); Fausto B. Gomez, O.P., *Bioethics: Ethics of Life* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2021).

BASIC THEOLOGICAL BIOETHICS

(First Cycle, 2 or 3 units or credits)

1. Fundamental Moral Categories
2. Ethical and Theological Bioethics
3. Bioethics of the Human Person, Conscience
4. Bioethics of Principles
5. Bioethics of Virtues
6. Bioethics and Environmental Ethics
7. Bioethics, Law and Laws
8. Bioethics as Life-Ethics: Meaning of Life, Health, Suffering, and Death
9. Beginning-of-Life Issues: Reproductive Technologies, Abortion
10. End-of-Life Issues: Euthanasia, Dysthanasia, and Orthothanasia
11. The Death Penalty, Homicide, and Suicide
12. Organ Transplants and Donation of Organs, Xenotransplants
13. Human Experimentation and Research on Human Subjects
14. Hospital Bioethics Committees
15. Conclusion: The Future of Bioethics

STL-MA IN BIOETHICS

(Second Cycle)

The post-graduate course comprises ten required major subjects including principles, virtues, issues at the beginning and end of life, bioethics committees, experimentation and research, evolution of bioethics and bioethical theories,

theology and ethics, law and ethics, and environmental ethics. The major in bioethics is integrated with the MA in Bioethics offered by the UST Graduate School.²⁹

UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery: Bioethics

The UST Faculty of Theology and the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery have worked hand in hand in spreading the good news of bioethics from the perspective of reason and faith. Professors from the Faculty of Theology continue teaching at the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, and vice versa: professors of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery continue teaching bioethics at the UST Faculty of Theology. Moreover, professors from both faculties teach at the UST Graduate School.

The UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery was founded in 1871, the first faculty of medicine of the Philippines. From its beginning, ethics was part of the curricular offerings: from ethics, to deontology, to medical ethics, to bioethics, to biomedical ethics. Let me briefly present the curriculum of Bioethics of the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, from its beginning in the 1990s up to 2020. The Bioethics course is now appropriately called Biomedical Ethics and the Department of Bioethics, Department of Biomedical Ethics.

The curricular offerings of Bioethics are spread out in four clusters, one per year: first year, basic principles and attitudes; second year, the physician's relationships; third year, healing and caring for patients, and fourth year, clinical-moral cases.

Bioethics (or professional medical ethics) offered at the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery comprises four parts (8 units). The first part is entitled Basic Bioethics, which includes basic ethical categories: nature of the human person, human dignity, rights and duties, principles and virtues, conscience and the conscience of a physician, law and ethics, including the Ethical Code of Physicians, and life-issues in general. The second part is the Bioethics of Life, which includes issues at the beginning and end of life (life and health, abortion, contraception, in vitro fertilization or IVF, stem cell research, cloning, euthanasia, organ transplant, suffering, death, etc.), with specific appropriate cases. The third part is entitled Professional Relationships, which studies the various relationships of the physicians, including doctor-patient relationship, doctor-doctor relationship, doctor-nurse relationship, doctor-society relationship, etc. The fourth part is entitled Clinical-

²⁹ Cf. UST Faculty of Theology, *Prospectus* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2005), 28-29.

Moral Cases: usually once a month a case is presented by the senior medical students and discussed among them and with clinical physicians and bioethicists.

For over twenty years, I taught basic Bioethics at the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, Manila. According to most of my medical students, the two most significant topics of basic bioethics for them are the ethical principles, including bioethical principles and attitudes, and virtues and the main virtues of physicians.

Summing up, basically the curricular offerings of Bioethics in medicine are equal since the 1990s. Four programs are offered, one per year (the last year, year four is the year of the medical clerks):

Bioethics I: Basic Principles and Attitudes (Virtues)

Bioethics II: The Physician's Relationships

Bioethics III: Healing and Caring for Patients

Bioethics IV: Clinical-moral Cases.³⁰

By Way of Conclusion: Bioethics for Everyone

Truly bioethics is important for everyone. Its growing relevance today is attested by the fact that bioethics education is becoming an integral part of a holistic education - a subject in the health sciences, in the humanities, in philosophy and theology. Certainly, "bioethics interests everyone concerned with the interface of technology, nature, and human nature; as a result, it has been a highly successful addition to educational curricula."³¹

Bioethics is important for everyone in a personal and social sense. We all are custodians of our own health, and bioethics may help us be healthy: *Mens sana in corpore sano* (a sound mind in a sound body); a temperate style of life, a hopeful attitude, a virtuous living. Furthermore, we are all potential patients in need of a doctor, and bioethics will help us know better our dignity that ought to be respected, and our rights, including the right to adequate health care information, the right to refuse useless treatment, and the right to privacy and confidentiality.³²

³⁰ Cf. UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, *Prospectus 2014-2015* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2014), 32-33. Up to the second and a half decade of the third millennium, Bioethics II was Bioethics III and vice-versa.

³¹ Daniel Callahan, "Bioethics in Education: Introduction," *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* (1995), 256.

³² Cf. Thomas S. Shannon, *An Introduction to Bioethics* (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1997), 143-145.

Bioethics in Christian perspective confirms basic ethical principles and values developed by reason, provides a deeper meaning to life, suffering, and death, and opens the door to transcendence. Theological Bioethics is doubly significant for all the followers of Christ – as human beings and as Disciples of Christ; faith in Jesus commits all the faithful to serve life. For the followers of the Way, the imitation of Christ is the healthiest way of living.

Lay men and women are asked by their faith to be at the service of the Gospel of Life – as individual persons and as members of the family.³³

The Christian family, a community of life and love—of love for life—contributes with other peoples and associations to the defense and promotion of the culture of life. The role of the family in building a culture of life is, according to John Paul II, “decisive and irreplaceable.” As a domestic Church, the Christian family is committed to proclaim, celebrate, and serve life.³⁴

For priests the Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests recommends it. This document tells us that ongoing formation must be integral, that is, it ought to comprise the human, the spiritual, the intellectual, and the pastoral dimensions. Intellectual formation is ordered to the deepening in the classical subject matter of formation, namely, biblical, dogmatic, moral, liturgical matters, etc. It must also take up the new current of thought, including bioethical issues. We read in the Directory: “Particular importance in intellectual formation must be given to the handling of themes which today have more relevance in cultural debates and pastoral practices, such as, for example, those related to social ethics, bioethics, etc.”³⁵

The Church urges consecrated men and women to evangelize health care centers and “increase their knowledge of bioethics at the service of the Gospel of life.”³⁶ Hence, theological bioethics is an important subject in the continuing formation of priests, religious men and women, lay apostles. Hence, its relevance for theologians and students of sacred science.

Bioethics, as a normative life science, is necessary for all physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals, who have to know and practice the bioethical

³³ Cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981; Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 2016.

³⁴ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 92.

³⁵ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), nos. 70, 74, 77.

³⁶ John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata* (The Vatican, 1996), 83.

dimension of scientific medicine and biotechnology. For Christian health care professionals, their vocation of caring and curing is a ministry in the Church's healing mission.

Bioethics is also important for teachers. We read in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*: "All teachers are to be inspired by academic ideals and by the principles of an authentic human life."³⁷ Bioethics presents and explains to us the ethical principles of an authentic human life. We, teachers, most particularly teachers of Theology, are to be competent not only in our own subject matter, but also knowledgeable concerning the basic questions of life and its meaning, part of the extracurricular questions of our students. We like to ponder these words I heard from one of my professors – words of Saint Augustine: "I learned not from those who taught me, but from those who talked with me, as I try to pour into their ears the way I felt about things."

Bioethics is life-ethics, ethics of human life. For us, Christians, Christ is our Life! (Jn 14:6) And the Gospel of Christ is the Gospel of Life, and all humans are brothers and sisters who deserve respect for their inviolable right to life. Human life is a gift and a task. It is God's gift and our task: the task of proclaiming, celebrating, and serving life.

Human life is a unique value that ought to be defended and promoted by all human beings. Moses keeps inviting you and me: "Choose life that you and your descendants may live" (Deut 30:19). Human life must be respected, then, from the moment of conception (against abortion) to natural death (against euthanasia and against the death penalty). The true meaning of human life is giving it in loving service to others.

In conclusion, the University of Santo Tomas has contributed significantly to the evangelization of the Philippines, and - through the faculties of Theology, of Medicine and Surgery, and also the UST Graduate School, to the proclamation of the Gospel of Life, and to the development of bioethics – of life ethics - in the Philippines, in Asia, and in the world.

... and this journey continues! **PS**

³⁷ John Paul II, *Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1990), n. 22.

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