This paper describes the spirituality of the faculty and student respondents. The questionnaire solicited the respondents’ perceptions of themselves and their feelings. They identified persons, symbols, object, and activities that give meaning to their lives, their relationship with others, and the “Divine”. Results showed that the respondents described themselves as “a person with dignity”, “a child of God” whose primary purpose is to love and to serve. Family members, good friends and supervisors are people who remind them of God’s love and compassion. Symbols of cross, crucifix, heart; Church and chapels; Prayers, Mass, Retreats and Recollections are activities that reminded the respondents of God’s presence inside the university.

**Keywords:** spirituality, life, presence of God

**Introduction**

For the past few years, spirituality has become the latest fad both in the corporate world and in the field of education. Spirituality is a personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate question about life. It is an inner path enabling a person to discover the essence of his or her being, or the deepest values and meanings by which a person lives and is often considered as a source of inspiration, and healing in life. It refers to one’s growth towards spiritual maturity, which is reflected in one’s relationships with God, self, and others (Ma, 2003).

In April 2002, a good number of executives of varied background from industries trooped to Harvard Business School to attend the conference on “Leadership, Values, and Spirituality”. Prominent businessmen and executives shared their views on how spirituality changed their directions in life. Tony Shwartz, who lived a financially fulfilling life as a writer, was dissatisfied with his success. He discovered that the primary values of humility, service, health, and authenticity bring peace and inner satisfaction. As co-founder and co-chairman of Wainwright Bank and Trust Company, Robert Glassman found that spirituality at work can be expressed as one’s commitment to social justice. Ricardo Levy, chairman of Catalytica Energy Systems, noted that executives are trained for action, not for contemplation. He discovered the need for spiritual guidance in making crucial decisions, especially those that affect other people like the employees. In his guidelines, Levy emphasized the need to quiet the mind, which is contemplation, in order to reach man’s deep inside and hear the “inner voice”. He advised everyone to remain humble in the face of temptation and power. He further states that humility is an important element in man’s life for power can intoxicate him. The Harvard Conference challenged business leaders to lead with integrity, to reflect on their spiritual values and to create a fulfilling...
workplace. According to Wong (2003), there is a widespread belief that, for companies to survive, it would be helpful to seek inspiration from “Above” and tap employees’ spiritual resources. A good and healthy dosage of spirituality and meaning at the workplace improves morale and productivity among employees.

The Higher Education Research Institute of the University of California, Los Angeles conducted a study entitled “Spirituality and Professoriate: A national study of faculty beliefs, attitudes, and behavior” in 2003. The study revealed that for many faculties, the spiritual dimension of life is highly relevant. Faculty members who scored high in spirituality have a positive outlook in work and life. According to Roger and Love (2008), there is a need to prepare spiritually higher education professionals who will prepare their students to work in a spiritually insensitive dehumanizing organizations and institutions. In the same year, the same institute of the University of California Los Angeles launched “Spirituality in Higher Education: Students’ Search for Meaning and Purpose”. The study conducted from 2003-2010 examined the role that the institution played in facilitating the development of students’ spiritual and religious qualities. Over-all findings provided a powerful argument for the proposition that higher education should attend more to students’ spiritual development because spirituality is essential to students’ lives. Furthermore, it revealed that assisting students’ spiritual growth will help create a new generation who are more caring, more globally aware, and more committed to social justice and at the same time it enabled the students to respond to the stresses and tensions of the rapidly changing technological society with a greater sense of equanimity.

What is the effect of living in an atmosphere surrounded by competition, relativism, highly technological means of communication, accessibility of malls and various means of recreation and relaxation to their connectedness to the Creator? The researcher believes that only through spirituality and spiritual values can they overcome the effect of the modern world. This paper describes the spirituality of faculty and students of the University of Santo Tomas. The study is important for three vital reasons. First, it highlights the respondents’ perceptions of themselves and their purpose in life. Second, it reveals specific activities that deepen and strengthened the relationship between the family and the Divine. Third, it identifies specific persons, places, symbols, objects, and activities that give meaning on the life of the respondents and remind them of the presence of “God”. Results can be used as a reference point to strengthen areas for faculty and students spiritual development.

Methodology

The study was conducted for two and a half years, from academic year 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. The researcher formulated open-ended questions with the assistance of experts in the field of Education and Psychology. The questionnaire solicited the respondents’ perception of themselves and their feelings. They identified persons, symbols, object and activities that give meaning to their lives, their relationship with others, and the “Divine”. Responses were tallied, tabulated, and ranked from highest to lowest. Only the first three highest answers were included in the presentation of the results. This is for the reason that they provided the most outstanding perceptions that will be the basis for recommendations and future studies of this research. The ranked responses of the faculty and students were compared according to the most common responses that emerged. A total of 113 faculty members from the College of Science and 797 students from the College of Tourism and Hospitality Management and Education of the University of Santo Tomas were included in the study. As an initial attempt to start the research, the availability and accessibility of the respondents are given primary considerations. All students enrolled in the classes of the researcher and other available sections were
included in the study.

**Findings**

**Who Am I and My Purpose in Life**

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A person with dignity</td>
<td>A child of God</td>
<td>To teach</td>
<td>To be happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A creative person</td>
<td>A friend</td>
<td>To serve the Lord</td>
<td>To serve God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A happy person</td>
<td>A happy/loving person</td>
<td>To work</td>
<td>To love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The faculty described themselves as “a person with dignity” imbued with creative ability while the students depicted themselves as “a child of God. Both set of respondents portrayed themselves as a “happy/loving person”.

**Persons, Symbols, Object that give meaning to my life**

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>What are the symbols and objects that give that give meaning to my life?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My Family</td>
<td>Symbol of a cross/crucifix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Symbol of a cross/crucifix</td>
<td>My Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bible</td>
<td>Symbol of a heart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family ranked first by the faculty while second for the students as persons that give meaning to their lives. The symbols of cross/crucifix and a heart and the Bible are reminders of God’s presence in their lives.

**Activities that give meaning to my life**

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Things that I do that give meaning to my life</th>
<th>Things that I do with my family that give meaning to my life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To work</td>
<td>To love</td>
<td>Attend the Mass with my family</td>
<td>Eat with my family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To be with my family</td>
<td>To help/serve others</td>
<td>Eat with my family</td>
<td>Travel/join the family outing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To study</td>
<td>To study</td>
<td>Watch movies with my family</td>
<td>Watch movies with my family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of activities that give meaning to their lives, ranked first is to work and to be with the family, second on the part of the faculty. Students ranked “to love” and “to help/serve” first and second respectively. Both respondents ranked “to study” as the third. In terms of their relationship with their family, activities that are given importance are the attendance to the Mass by the faculty. Eating and watching movies with the family are both enjoyed by faculty students who can be noted that both faculty and students. Ranked second is traveling or join the family for an outing on the part of the students.

**University atmosphere and activities**

Both faculty and students ranked “Prayers” and Mass”, “Presence of the Church and Chapels” and “Retreat and Recollections” as activities and structures that remind them of God’s presence inside the campus. Presence of people like “good teachers, friends” and “supervisors” lets them feel God’s closeness in their lives. “Paskuhan”, a Christmas activity, ranked third by the students where they could feel the excitement of the
coming of the Savior with an Eucharistic celebration and culminated by eating together, attended by all members of the community.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Faculty Activities</th>
<th>Students Activities</th>
<th>Faculty Activities</th>
<th>Students Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Through Prayers</td>
<td>Through Prayers</td>
<td>Mass</td>
<td>Mass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Presence of the Church/Chapels</td>
<td>Presence of the Church/Chapels</td>
<td>Good superior/Supervisor</td>
<td>Prayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Retreat/Recollection</td>
<td>Good Teachers</td>
<td>Retreat/Recollection</td>
<td>Paskuhan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

The Human Person and His Purpose in Life

The respondents described themselves as a person with dignity and a child of God. Genesis 1:26 tells them that man was created in the image and likeness of God. All human beings, in as much as they are created in the image of God, possess a dignity which cannot be stripped away by anyone. The dignity refers to man’s value which is derived from and conferred upon him by a higher value, God. Because of this dignity, a person is not just something but someone, capable of self knowledge and of freely giving himself in relation with God and with others. They all belong to God’s family and therefore all are children of God. Ephesians 1:5 pointed out that God destined them for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will. God created man unique with varied abilities that make him creative. God wants them to be happy and loving for He created them out of love and desires for their happiness.

For faculty members, to teach is their primary purpose in life. It is their work. Teaching and working are ways to serve the Lord. Vatican Council II describes teaching as the most important vocation for they help parents in carrying out their duties. This vocation requires special qualities of mind and heart, most careful preparation and a constant readiness to accept new ideas and to adopt the old. The teachers should therefore be prepared for their work with special care, having the appropriate qualifications and adequate learning both religious and secular. They should also be skilled in the art of education and should continue to study to keep themselves abreast of the discoveries of modern times. All teachers must possess charity both towards each other and towards the students. They should bear testimony by their lives and their teaching to the one Teacher, Jesus Christ. In the performance of their duties as teachers, faculty respondents derived meaning of life through their work. Work is part of the original state of man. It represents a fundamental dimension of human existence. Jesus taught them that they must appreciate work. The work of a teacher is not that easy. It requires a big amount of patience, forbearance, pains and difficulty. If work is done to serve the Lord, it can be a means of sanctification. The teacher whose primary work is the formation of his students can be compared to the hands of Christ that is continuous to create and do what is good.

On the part of the students, happiness is their primary purpose in life. In a follow-up interview with some respondents, they find happiness when they receive their daily allowance, winning the competition, have access to social networking, and have someone to cling on or be with. They describe love as a strong feeling of affection that results into an intimate relationship. Every human being has a natural desire for happiness. However, young people must remember that happiness lies in fulfilling oneself and attaining the end to which
one is ordained. The more they do things for God such as serving Him, the greater will be our happiness. Young people should be directed to a deeper meaning of happiness especially so that they are described as those who have grown impatient at times, and indeed rebellious in their distress. Happiness starts with knowledge, followed by love and leads them to service. Though love is one of the purposes in life identified by the students, there is no love without knowledge. There is no true love unless it manifests itself in action and that is service. Happy people perceive the world as a safe place, feel more confident, more cooperative and tolerant and live a healthier, energized, and satisfied lives. If people are happy, it is easy for them to reach out with others and share God’s love through service.

Seeing Life from Persons, Symbols and Object

As noted by the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, human life is God’s greatest gift to them. In their modern society, people are increasingly experiencing a new need for meaning. The respondents identified the family as the purpose and people that give meaning to their lives. Filipinos are noted for the love of family. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines emphasized on the role of the family as the vital cell of any society. It is the school of human and Christian virtue and the place where the faith is first proclaimed to children by their parents. A family is formed when a man and a woman are united in marriage. God instituted the family. Relationships established in the family create a bond that sustains life among its members (Catechism for Filipino Catholics, 1997). According to Pope John Paul II (1999), a family becomes what you are. Their lives, everything they are and have, are due ultimately to our birth, upbringing and support of our families. The real meaning of love is learned in the family for the family has the mission to guard, reveal, and communicate love. Respondents describe a family as a place of intimacy, love, and trust where individuals may find refuge amidst the competition with dehumanizing forces in modern society. The family is the cradle of life and love that people are born and grown. It is in the family that the mutual giving of self is observed. The husband and wife create an environment of life in which children develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny.

The symbol of the cross or crucifix reminds every Christian of the sacrifice of Christ. This symbol is very visible in the homes, churches, cemeteries, and hospitals. Christians go by way of the cross. In the homes of Catholics who strive to make their faith a vital force in their lives, the crucifix holds a prominent place. It hangs upon the wall and in the bedrooms. The value of the crucifix as an aid to prayer and to Christian living is obvious. There is no symbol without so vividly reminds them of the infinite love of God for man as does the image of God’s own Son who offered His life on the cross that they might have eternal life (Trece, 1986). The symbol of the heart reminds the students as the primary source of life. Feelings come from the heart. Like the cross or crucifix, it is also visible in the form of pendant, earrings, pin, and bracelet. The Catechism for Filipino Catholics (1997) pointed out that faith comes from the heart — the source of loving, trusting and hoping in the Lord that comes from God’s own love flooding our hearts. However, the document warned them that disordered desires also come from the heart. They are all called as St. Paul realized, for “total dedication of the heart and of desire”. Jesus said that they must love their Lord with all their heart, with all their soul and with all their strength. The human heart is linked with their relationship with God.

The Bible gives meaning to the life of the faculty. They shared that they turn to the Bible for answers to their questions, for healing, for peace, in all situations. According to Belmonte (2006), the Bible is superior to any human book for three reasons: (1) its divine origin: God’s authorship. (2) its content: the supernatural truths.
(3) its end: the salvation of all people. The Bible is extremely useful. “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” . Man must respond to God’s gift of Sacred Scripture. Everyone must accept the Bible joyfully, and exert effort to delve deeply into the work of God and His plan for them.

**Meaningful Endeavors as an Individual and as a Member of a Family**

Though work was identified by the faculty as their purpose in life, it also gives meaning to life as well. It is because it is through work that they can express their creativity. Nowadays, the work of a teacher becomes demanding, fast-paced, and stressful, most respondents cling to their job for it is the source of their income. Motivation to do their best in the performance of their work is motivated by their families. Family and work are united by a special relationship according to Compendium for Social Doctrine of the Church, for the family constitutes one of the most important terms of reference for shaping the social and ethical order of human work. Work is essential insofar as it represents the condition that makes it possible to establish a family for the means by which the family is maintained through work.

Teaching as a work requires a continuous study. Both the faculty and students find this activity meaningful in their lives. The primary reason why students study is to search for truth that can help them as they mature and face the world of work. Study is described by Sertillanges (1987) as a prayer to truth. As teachers they are obliged to present the truth, help the students discover the truth and desire truth. They are challenged to be obsessed by the desire for knowledge that is well anchored so that passion for truth will alight on them.

Attending the Mass together is given importance by the faculty members. Filipino Catholics generally have high regard for the Eucharistic celebration or Holy Mass (Catechism for Filipino Catholics, 1997). Mass is a public celebration, a liturgical celebration, a community worship, consisting of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The later commemorates Christ’s Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI reminded families to hear a good mass together. It is a celebration in a form where substance has not changed despite the great diversity of time and liturgies. Eating together with members of the family was expressed by both faculty and student respondents. The Eucharistic celebration is a meal. It involves preparing the food and drink, offering them to the participants, and eating and drinking together. Based from the result of the survey, it was noted that attendance to the Mass was not listed among the student respondents. The Catholic church noted many difficulties that affect the attitude of young people towards the Mass. Catechism for Filipino Catholics (1997) noted that personal motivation for going to Mass varies greatly. Some go simply because they want to avoid mortal sin or just to show obedience to their parents who will require them to attend the Mass. Others simply go out of routine, to be with social group of friends, or even to show off their new clothes. Such weak motivation often leads to increasing rebellious reactions among the youth. Their elders often feel incapable of fostering a real loving understanding of the Eucharist and thus fall back on distasteful authoritarian command.

Other activities both enumerated by faculty and student respondents are eating and watching movies together. Nowadays, busy schedule of parents as well as children make it difficult to have family dinner. However, eating together as a family are moments when children learn family values. Conversations during meal provide opportunities for the family to bond, plan, connect, and learn from one another which modern technology cannot offer. Watching movies together can be a lot of fun and a great way to spend time together. Movies can be a source of inspiration, a great pastime, a stress-buster, a medium of leisure, and amusement.
There are movies made on social issues that can help create awareness and deliver important message to the family.

Visible Atmosphere and University Activities: Reminders of God’s Presence

The University of Santo Tomas is a Pontifical, Catholic university. Respondents ranked first “Prayers” as an activity inside the university where they are reminded of God’s presence. Every noon time, the “Angelus” is aired all over the campus. In the different buildings and colleges, a prayer is normally aired at 7 o’clock in the morning which signals the beginning of classes. Prayers are also recited before and after classes.

God tirelessly calls each person to a mysterious encounter with himself. This conversation is called prayer. Prayer unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation as a reciprocal call between God and man. Life of prayer is a good habit that everyone must develop. It is the habit of being in the presence of God and in communion with him (Belmonte, 2006). The highest form of prayer is the Mass. The faculty members earlier pointed out the importance of the attendance to the Mass as the primary family activity. This time, both faculty and students highlighted Mass as the number one university-wide activity where they feel the presence of God. Belmonte (2006) explained that Mass or Liturgy is the priestly action of Jesus Christ, continued in and by the church under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The liturgy includes the worship of God, the presence of Christ, the action of the Holy Spirit, the history of salvation, and the sanctification of mankind. The Catechism for Filipino Catholics (1997) avowed that Christ instituted the Eucharist to signify and bring about the unity in the church. Even in the local parishes in the Philippines, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is the most effective way to “weld the whole Body together” for it is the clearest symbol of that charity and unity of the Mystical Body without which there can be no salvation. In celebrating the Eucharist together, the faithful is drawn into the compelling love of Christ to become one heart in love and practice in deed when they profess the Creed.

The university has church inside the campus for it belongs to a parish. It is called the “Santissimo Rosario Church”. There are also chapels available in some buildings where students can take time to pray and reflect. The church and chapels are house of prayer where the most holy Eucharist is celebrated and preserved. A place suitable for prayer, respondents expressed that they find help, comfort, serenity, acceptance, and love by just simply sitting or kneeling down, venerating the presence of the Son of God. Silence is strictly observed inside these places.

The university provides retreats and recollections to all members of the community. The activity allows a quiet time to pray, study the Word of God, reflect and re-establish camaraderie. *Paskuhan* from the word “pasko” meaning Christmas, is a university-wide activity in anticipation of the commemoration of the birth of their Lord. It is a special thanksgiving celebration re-enacting the night when Joseph and Mary were looking for a place “for her time has come to give birth to a Savior”. This particular scenario is called “panunuluyan”. The highlight of the activity is the Eucharistic celebration where all the members of the Thomasian community—students, faculty, administrators, non-academic personnel, religious community are gathered together. In a very festive atmosphere, a common meal is shared by everyone after the Mass.

Student respondents noted the presence of good teachers and true friends and good supervisors on the part of the faculty respondents. During the interview, both groups described them as people who are always available to listen to their problems, walk with them in good times and bad times, lift them up when they are down, accept them without bias, and willingness to forgive from mistakes or wrongdoings done. These traits remind them that God is truly around in the presence of these people.
Conclusion

The whole of man’s life is a quest and a search for God. This relationship with God can be ignored or even forgotten or dismissed, but it can never be eliminated. Indeed, among all the world’s visible creatures, only man has a “capacity for God”. The human being is a personal being created by God to be in relationship with him; man finds life and self-expression only in relationship and tends naturally to God (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 2004).

The respondents described themselves as a child of God, a person with dignity, creative, happy, and loving. Their primary purpose is to serve God and this activity gives meaning to their lives. The family is important for faculty and students. It is the source of inspiration, motivation to accomplish their roles to teach or to study. Eating and watching movies with the members of the family create bonding and fun. The faculty respondents give importance to work. Symbols that remind them of God’s presence are cross or crucifix and heart. For faculty, the Bible gives them the necessary strength, deepening their faith and enriching their spiritual lives.

Inside the university, respondents identified prayers, Masses, retreats, recollections, “Paskuhan” as activities that remind them of God’s presence. The church and chapels are venues for reflection, meditation, where they feel the presence of God in solitude.

There are meaningful people whom they associated with the presence of God. First are the family members, followed by good friends, teachers, supervisors, and superiors. They showed love and compassion, the traits of Jesus Christ.

Spirituality is recognizing the presence of the Divine in one’s life, purpose of existence, activities, surroundings and people. The presence of the Divine reminds them of their origin — they come from God who creates them in his own image and likeness. There are some attributes of God that every person is capable of shaping or forming themselves in their search for deeper relationship with God and with their neighbors. Sad to say that these attributes did not show in the result. These are God’s truthfulness, faithfulness, steadfastness, and love. All of them are the foundations of a true love, which because of their new culture as a result of technology and globalization are hard to find. To attain these attributes, they simply need honesty, humility, and obedience. These, for the researcher are the ultimate manifestation of spirituality which every believer must observe in every situation, every time of the day from sunrise to sunset.

References


