

HOMILY ON THE FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH
(Patron of St. Joseph's Theological Institute)
19 March 2009

I. INTRODUCTION

1. I would like to give a brief reflection this morning based on the three main aspects that I believe unite us all here at the Institute: (a) Seeking Understanding, (b) Belief and (c) Proclamation.
2. But first, I need to make an observation:
A striking thing about academics like ourselves is that often we are not comfortable with admitting that we do not know – it is very hard for us who think we know, to admit that we don't know.

Today we celebrate the feast of St. Joseph, and the fact is that we really do not know much about him at all, even though various recreations have been attempted by artists, painters, sculptors.

II. THE 'WORD' OF GOD ENTRUSTED TO JOSEPH

1. We may not know much about Joseph, as I have just said, but one thing we do know:

That it was to this man that the 'Word' of God – who is Jesus Christ – was entrusted.

It was through this simple, unassuming man, a carpenter – and according to some traditions not a very good one – that the Salvation of the world was entrusted – that the Good News was presented to the world in the Flesh.

It was through Joseph that a new sense of Hope came into the world – that a new perception of a much more direct and personal relationship with God came into being, when His Son became one of us under the care of St. Joseph.

2. All it took to bring this about and to make this difference was one ordinary man.

III. ST JOSEPH'S THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE – CUSTODIAN OF THE DIVINE WORD

1. It is after this man and what he stood for that our Institute is named.

And this becomes a challenge for us – it lays on us a duty that we cannot dodge.

Like the Joseph of old in his time and space, we are today, in our own time and space, the custodians of the Good News...we are the new instruments of Salvation.

The Good News, the Word of God, has been entrusted to us – like it was entrusted to Joseph – and all our study, teaching and learning are centred around this Word.

We study in order that we may believe, and that having believed we may proclaim – STUDY – BELIEF – PROCLAMATION.

2. This, whether you believe it or not, should be **an Institute of Good News**, where people come to learn to be journalists of good news.

The world has more than enough of the other kind of ‘news’ – we should be different – something about us should set us apart – otherwise there is a very real danger of this Institute sliding into mediocrity – just flowing with the times, with the crowd.

We do not want to be mediocre – we want to show excellence in academic achievement – excellence in human development – and excellence in faith and excellence in proclaiming that faith.

It started with one man – Joseph – and all this starts with one person: with You – and with me.

People who encounter us should go away with a sense that their lives have been touched for the better...that they can go away with a meaningful hope...an encouragement that will help them to keep on keeping on – this is an Institute of Good News!

3. In the end I believe that this is what we will be judged on:

Not on the number of credits we have accumulated – not on the excellence of our Research Papers – or good marks in Logic or Canon Law or Greek – and not on the number of degrees and academic qualifications we have - but on whether or not we emerge from this Institute with a broader sense of Humanity, with greater Compassion, and with a living and genuine Faith.

4. We will also be judged on FIDELITY to what we stand for.

We study in order that we may believe, and that having believed we may proclaim.

That is what a Faith-Seeking-Understanding is all about, and that is what we are here for.

5. Sometimes one looks around, and one wonders whether we are not just producing clever or intelligent pagans!
6. If all our teaching and learning are not grounded on the values that ultimately matter, it is nothing but an exchange of ignorance – our teaching and learning becomes nothing but a cross-pollination of vanities. You think you leave this place with a B.A. in Philosophy, or a Diploma in Religious Studies, and, in fact, all you leave with is a B.A. in ignorance and a Diploma in deformation.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. In a way, the salvation of the entire world was entrusted to Joseph.

And here we are at this Institute, coming from every corner of the world, challenged, each in his own way, to make a difference in a world of hopelessness, of disease and war, a world without honour (St. Joseph is described in Mt.'s gospel as “an upright and honourable man”) – a world of privatized religion in which everything is up to me, there are no longer basic truths and basic values that society lives by: it's all up to me.

2. Let us therefore strive to make this Institute **not just a seat of learning, but also a seat of faith, a seat of hope, a seat of genuine humanity.**
3. Let us do this, and all our efforts here at St. Joseph's Theological Institute will be blessed.

Dr. Luke G. Mlilo PhD

