

## THE SERVICE OF FAITH AND THE PROMOTION OF JUSTICE IN AMERICAN JESUIT HIGHER EDUCATION

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This conference on the commitment to justice in American Jesuit higher education comes at an important moment in the rich history of the twenty-eight colleges and universities represented here this evening. We also join Santa Clara University in celebrating the 150th anniversary of its founding.

Just as significant as this moment in history, is our location. Santa Clara Valley, named after the mission at the heart of this campus, is known worldwide as "Silicon Valley," the home of the microchip. Surely when Father Nobili, the founder of this university, saw the dilapidated church and compound of the former Franciscan mission, he could never have imagined this valley as the center of a global technological revolution.

This juxtaposition of mission and microchip is emblematic of all the Jesuit schools. Originally founded to serve the educational and religious needs of poor immigrant populations, they have become highly sophisticated institutions of learning in the midst of global wealth, power, and culture. The turn of the millennium finds them in all their diversity: they are larger, better equipped, more complex and professional than ever before, and also more concerned about their Catholic, Jesuit identity.

In the history of American Jesuit higher education, there is much to be grateful for, first to God and the Church, and surely to the many faculty, students, administrators, and benefactors who have made it what it is today. But this conference brings us together from across the United States with guests from Jesuit universities elsewhere, not to congratulate one another, but for a strategic purpose. On behalf of the complex, professional and pluralistic institutions you represent, you are here to face a question as difficult as it is central: How can the Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States express faith-filled concern for justice in their existence as Christian academies of higher learning, in what their faculty do, and in what their students become?

As a contribution to your response, I would like to reflect with you on what faith and justice has meant for Jesuits since 1975, consider some concrete circumstances of today, suggest what justice rooted in faith could mean in American Jesuit higher education, and conclude with an agenda for the first decade of the years 2000.

After much prayer and deliberation, the Congregation slowly realized that the entire Society of Jesus in all its many works was being invited by the Spirit of God to set out on a new direction. The overriding purpose of the Society of Jesus, namely “the service of faith,” must also include “the promotion of justice.” This new direction was not confined to those already working with the poor and marginalized in what was called “the social apostolate.” Rather, this commitment was to be “a concern of our whole life and a dimension of all our apostolic endeavors.”<sup>1</sup> So central to the mission of the entire Society was this union of faith and justice that it was to become the “integrating factor” of all the Society’s works,<sup>2</sup> and in this light “great attention” was to be paid in evaluating every work, including educational institutions.<sup>3</sup>

I myself attended GC 32, representing the Province of the Near East where, for centuries, the apostolic activity of the Jesuits has concentrated on education in a famous university and some outstanding high schools. Of course some Jesuits worked in very poor villages, refugee camps or prisons, and some fought for the rights of workers, immigrants, and foreigners, but this was not always considered authentic, mainstream Jesuit work. In Beirut we were well aware that our medical school, staffed by very holy Jesuits, was producing, at least at that time, some of the most corrupt citizens in the city, but this was taken for granted. The social mood of the explosive Near East did not favor a struggle against sinful, unjust structures. The liberation of Palestine was the most important social issue. The Christian churches had committed themselves to many works of charity, but involvement in the promotion of justice would have tainted them by association with leftist movements and political turmoil.

The situation I describe in the Near East was not exceptional in the worldwide Society at that time. I was not the only delegate who was ignorant of matters pertaining to justice and injustice. The 1971 Synod of Bishops had prophetically declared, “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel, or, in other words, of the church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation,”<sup>4</sup> but few of us knew what this meant in our concrete circumstances.

Earlier, in 1966, Father Arrupe had pointed out to the Latin American Provincials how the socio-economic situation throughout the continent contradicted the Gospel, and “from this situation rises the moral obligation of the Society to rethink all its ministries and every form of its apostolates to see if they really offer a response to the urgent priorities which justice and social equity call for.”<sup>5</sup> Many of us failed to see the relevance of his message to our situation. But please note that Father Arrupe did not ask for the suppression of the apostolate of education in favor of social activity. On the contrary, he affirmed that “even an apostolate like education—at all levels—which is so sincerely wanted by the Society and whose importance is clear to the entire world, in its concrete forms today must be the object of reflection in the light of the demands of the social problem.”<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps the incomprehension or reluctance of some of us delegates was one reason why GC 32 finally took a radical stand. With a passion both inspiring and disconcerting, the General Congregation coined the formula, “the service of faith and the promotion of justice,” and used it adroitly to push every Jesuit work and every individual Jesuit to make a choice, providing little leeway for the fainthearted. Many inside and outside the Society were outraged by the “promotion of justice.” As Father Arrupe rightly perceived, his Jesuits were collectively entering upon a more severe way of the cross, which would

surely entail misunderstandings and even opposition on the part of civil and ecclesiastical authorities, many good friends, and some of our own members. Today, twenty-five years later, this option has become integral to our Jesuit identity, to the awareness of our mission, and to our public image in both Church and society.<sup>7</sup>

The summary expression “the service of faith and the promotion of justice” has all the characteristics of a world-conquering slogan using a minimum of words to inspire a maximum of dynamic vision, but at the risk of ambiguity. Let us examine first the service of faith, then the promotion of justice.

#### A. The service of faith

From our origins in 1540 the Society has been officially and solemnly charged with “the defense and the propagation of the faith.” In 1975, the Congregation reaffirmed that, for

Since Saint Ignatius wanted love to be expressed not only in words but also in deeds, the Congregation committed the Society to the promotion of justice as a concrete, radical but proportionate response to an unjustly suffering world. Fostering the virtue of justice in people was not enough. Only a substantive justice can bring about the kinds of structural and attitudinal changes that are needed to uproot those sinful oppressive injustices that are a scandal against humanity and God.

This sort of justice requires an action-oriented commitment to the poor with a courageous personal option. In some ears the relatively mild expression “promotion of justice” echoed revolutionary, subversive, and even violent language. For example, the American State Department recently accused some Colombian Jesuits of being Marxist-inspired founders of a guerilla organization. When challenged, the U.S. government apologized for this mistake, which shows that some message did get through.

Just as in *diakonia fidei* the term faith is not specified, so in the “promotion of justice,” the term justice also remains ambiguous. The 32<sup>nd</sup> Congregation would not have voted for Decree 4 if, on the one hand, socio-economic justice had been excluded, or if, on the other hand, the justice of the Gospel had not been included. A stand in favor of social justice that was almost ideological, and simultaneously a strong option for “that justice of the Gospel which embodies God’s love and saving mercy”<sup>12</sup> were both indispensable. Refusing to clarify the relationship between the two, GC 32 maintained its radicality by simply juxtaposing *diakonia fidei* and “promotion of justice.”

In other decrees of the same Congregation, when the two dimensions of the one mission of the Society were placed together, some delegates sought to achieve a more integrated expression by proposing amendments such as the service of faith through or in the promotion of justice. Such expressions might better render the 1971 Synod’s identification of “action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world [as] a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel.”<sup>13</sup> But one can understand the Congregation’s fear that too neat or integrated an approach might weaken the prophetic appeal and water down the radical change in our mission.

In retrospect, this simple juxtaposition sometimes led to an “incomplete, slanted, and unbalanced reading” of Decree 4,<sup>14</sup> unilaterally emphasizing “one aspect of this mission to the detriment of the other,”<sup>15</sup> treating faith and justice as alternative or even rival tracks of ministry. “Dogmatism or ideology sometimes led us to treat each other more as adversaries than as companions. The promotion of justice has sometimes been separated

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whatever distortions or excesses occurred, and to demonstrate how, over the last twenty-five years, the Lord has patiently been teaching us to serve the faith that does justice in a more integral way.

### C. The ministry of education

In the midst of radical statements and unilateral interpretations associated with Decree 4, many raised doubts about our maintaining large educational institutions. They insinuated, if they did not insist, that direct social work among the poor and involvement with their movements should take priority. Today, however, the value of the educational apostolate is generally recognized, being the sector occupying the greatest Jesuit manpower and resources, but only on condition that it transform its goals, contents, and methods.

Even before GC 32, Father Arrupe had already fleshed out the meaning of *diakonia fidei*

Meeting in Silicon Valley brings to mind not only the intersection of the mission and the microchip, but also the dynamism and even



Students, in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering, and engage it constructively. They should learn to perceive, think, judge, choose, and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged and the oppressed. Campus ministry does much to foment such intelligent, responsible, and active compassion, compassion that deserves the name solidarity.

Our universities also boast a splendid variety of in-service programs, outreach programs, insertion programs, off-campus contacts, and hands-on courses. These should not be too optional or peripheral, but at the core of every Jesuit university's program of studies.

Our students are involved in every sort of social action—tutoring drop-outs, demonstrating in Seattle, serving in soup kitchens, promoting pro-life, protesting against the School of the Americas—and we are proud of them for it. But the measure of Jesuit universities is not what our students do but who they become and the adult Christian responsibility they will exercise in the future towards their neighbor and their world. For now, the activities they engage in, even with much good effect, are for their formation. This does not make the university a training camp for social activists. Rather, the students need close involvement with the poor and the marginal now, in order to learn about reality and become adults of solidarity in the future.

#### B. Research and teaching

If the measure and purpose of our universities lies in what the students become, then the faculty are at the heart of our universities. Their mission is tirelessly to seek the truth and to form each student into a whole person of solidarity who will take responsibility for the real world. What do they need in order to fulfil this essential vocation?

The faculty's "research, which must be rationally rigorous, firmly rooted in faith and open to dialogue with all people of good will,"<sup>25</sup> not only obeys the canons of each discipline, but ultimately embraces human reality in order to help make the world a more fitting place for six billion of us to inhabit. I want to affirm that university knowledge is valuable for its own sake, and at the same time knowledge must ask itself, "For whom? For what?"<sup>26</sup>

Usually we speak of professors in the plural, but what is at stake is more than the sum of so many individual commitments and efforts. It is a sustained interdisciplinary dialogue of research and reflection, a continuous pooling of expertise. The purpose is to assimilate experiences and insights according to their different disciplines in "a vision of knowledge which, well aware of its limitations, is not satisfied with fragments but tries to integrate them into a true and wise synthesis"<sup>27</sup> about the real world. Unfortunately many faculty still feel academically, humanly, and, I would say, spiritually unprepared for such an exchange.

In some disciplines, such as the life sciences, the social sciences, law, business, or medicine, the connections with "our time and place" may seem more obvious. These professors apply their disciplinary specialties to issues of justice and injustice in their research and teaching about health care, legal aid, public policy, and international relations. But every field or branch of knowledge has values to defend, with repercussions on the ethical level. Every discipline, beyond its necessary specialization, must engage



with human society, human life, and the environment in appropriate ways, cultivating moral concern about how people ought to live together.

All professors, in spite of the cliché of the ivory tower, are in contact with the world. But no point of view is ever neutral or value-free. By preference, by option, our Jesuit point of view is that of the poor. So our professors' commitment to faith and justice entails a most significant shift in viewpoint and choice of values. Adopting the point of view of those who suffer injustice, our professors seek the truth and share their search and its results with our students. A legitimate question, even if it does not sound academic, is for each professor to ask, "When researching and teaching, where and with whom is my heart?" To expect our professors to make such an explicit option and speak about it is obviously not easy; it entails risks. But I do believe that this is what Jesuit educators have publicly stated, in Church and in society, to be our defining commitment.

To make sure that the real concerns of the poor find their place in research, faculty members need an organic collaboration with those in the Church and in society who work among and for the poor and actively seek justice. They should be involved together in all aspects: presence among the poor, designing the research, gathering the data, thinking through problems, planning and action, doing evaluation and theological reflection. In each Jesuit Province where our universities are found, the faculty's privileged working relationships should be with projects of the Jesuit social apostolate—on issues such as poverty and exclusion, housing, AIDS, ecology, and Third World debt—and with the Jesuit Refugee Service helping refugees and forcibly displaced people.

Just as the students need the poor in order to learn, so the professors need partnerships with the social apostolate in order to research and teach and form. Such partnerships do not turn Jesuit universities into branch plants of social ministries or agencies of social change, as certain rhetoric of the past may have led some to fear, but are a verifiable pledge of the faculty's option, and really help, as the colloquial expression goes, "to keep your feet to the fire!"

If the professors choose viewpoints incompatible with the justice of the Gospel and consider researching, teaching, and learning to be separable from moral responsibility for their social repercussions, they are sending a message to their students. They are telling them that they can pursue their careers and self-interest without reference to anyone other than themselves.

By contrast, when faculty do take up inter-disciplinary dialogue and socially-engaged

ment by imitating them as "masters of knowledge and of moral commitment,"

We have already dwelt on the importance of formation and learning, of research and teaching. The social action that the students undertake, and the socially-relevant work that

want to play our role as students, as teachers and researchers, and as Jesuit universities in society.

As Jesuit higher education, we embrace new ways of learning and being formed in the pursuit of adult solidarity, new methods of researching and teaching in an academic community of dialogue, and a new university way of practicing faith-justice in society.

As we assume our Jesuit university characteristics in the new century, we do so with seriousness and hope. For this very mission has produced martyrs who prove that “a n institution of higher learning and research can become an instrument of justice in the name of the Gospel.”<sup>32</sup> But implementing Decree 4 is not something a Jesuit university accomplishes once and for all. It is rather an ideal to keep taking up and working at, a cluster of characteristics to keep exploring and implementing, a conversion to keep praying for.

In *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Pope John Paul II charges Catholic universities with a challenging agenda for teaching, research, and service: “The dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of nature, the search for peace and political stability, a more just sharing in the world’s resources, and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at a national and international level.”<sup>33</sup> These are both high ideals and concrete tasks. I encourage our Jesuit colleges and universities to take them up with critical understanding and deep conviction, with buoyant faith and much hope in the early years of the new century.

The beautiful words of GC 32 show us a long path to follow: “The way to faith and the way to justice are inseparable ways. It is up this undivided road, this steep road, that the pilgrim Church”—the Society of Jesus, the Jesuit College and University—“must travel and toil. Faith and justice are undivided in the Gospel which teaches that ‘faith makes its power felt through love.’<sup>34</sup> They cannot therefore be divided in our purpose, our action, our life.”<sup>35</sup> For the greater glory of God.

<sup>1</sup> G.C. 32, D.4, n.47.

<sup>2</sup> GC32, D.2, n.9.

<sup>3</sup> See GC 32, D.2, n.9 and D.4, n.76.

<sup>4</sup> Synod of Bishops, “Justice in the World,” 1971.

<sup>5</sup> Pedro Arrupe, S.J., “On the Social Apostolate in Latin America,” December 1966 (AR XIV, 791).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., “On the Social Apostolate,” January 2000, n.3.

<sup>8</sup> “Since evangelization is proclamation of that faith which is made operative in love of others (see Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 4:15), the promotion of justice is indispensable to it,” (GC 32, D.4, n.28).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. GC 34, D.26, n.5.

<sup>10</sup> For example, GC32, D.11, n.13.

<sup>11</sup> GC 34, D. 26, n.8.

<sup>12</sup> GC 33, D.1, n.32.

<sup>13</sup> Synod of Bishops, “Justice in the World,” 1971.

<sup>14</sup> Pedro Arrupe, S.J., *Rooted and Grounded in Love*, 67 (AR XVIII, 500).

<sup>15</sup> GC33, D.1, n.33.

<sup>16</sup> GC34, D.3, n.2.

<sup>17</sup> Pedro Arrupe, S.J., Address to the European Jesuit Alumni Congress, Valencia, August 1973, in *Hombres para los demás* (Barcelona: Diafora, 1983), 159.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* (Washington, D.C.: Jesuit Secondary Education Association, 1987).

<sup>19</sup>