

World Meeting of  
Universities entrusted to the Society of Jesus  
Loyola, 10 July, 2018

Through its commitment to the university, the Society seeks to contribute to turn the word of Jesus into a historical truth: ...

(John 10:10). Reconciliation is possible when there is life. Life produces reconciliation, which in turn makes life full. Reconciliation is a way of returning to life and making it grow towards fullness. A full life entails a kind of love capable of giving one's life so that all may have life. The growing commitment of the Society of Jesus within the university's endeavour takes on its meaning through the desire to effectively contribute to enabling a dignified full life for each and every human being, both in the present and in the future.

I truly appreciate this opportunity to meet in a place of such significance for those of us who want to play a part in the profound human and spiritual experience of Ignatius of Loyola and the first companions, founders of the Society of Jesus, who inspired the path which we have also decided to walk on. Special thanks to those who have prepared this meeting with such care and thought. To Fr. Michael Garanzini and his work teams; to the task forces that have been reflecting and having us reflect, on the crucial issues of our university apostolate. Thanks to the University of Deusto for welcoming us in this Meeting and to the Shrine of Loyola for making themselves available to us on this wonderful occasion.

As Universities under the responsibility of the Society of Jesus we have been building this space for a long time. Deusto and Loyola are physical locations where we can meet because they are aligned with the university calling of the Society of Jesus, that is, a universal calling, as were the Ibero-American University of Mexico in 2010 and the Australian Catholic



The 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus is an invitation to focus on the mission of the universities from a companionship perspective in a mission based on justice and reconciliation.

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Reconciliation is a message of hope based on the deep conviction as to the actions carried out by God (One and Triune) throughout history. The Father is reconciling all things through the incarnation, life, passion, death and the resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. He has given us his Spirit to make us collaborators in this work of reconciliation, a mission entrusted to the community of the followers of Jesus, the Church. The Society of Jesus was born as a collaborator in the reconciling mission that contributes to social justice, in which it finds its meaning.

The daily life of those of us who participate in the mission of the Society of Jesus throughout the world enables us to see that the reality of our world is far from having the necessary conditions for a peaceful human life, a deeply desired ideal of individuals and peoples. In the midst of a fully-fledged historical change, we are witnessing outrageously increasing levels of inequality that generates violence, forced migrations, racial discrimination, unwanted poverty, authoritarianisms and populisms that make false promises of social redemption... Sadly, we also witness the impossibility of stopping the deterioration of the environment, due to a lack of responsibility in the care of our Common House. Reconciliation with the environment is still unfinished business, on which we and our institutions need to take on greater responsibility.

In the midst of the concern about the weakening of public awareness, of the democratic political regimes and of public decision-making mechanisms, we face the enormous challenge of soundly joining in the new digital culture that is rapidly changing how human beings think and relate to each other.

This is not only a technological revolution, but the creation of a new world in which we live. The digital ecosystem is the beginning of a

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Feeling that we are heirs to the rich educational tradition of the Society of Jesus, or even acknowledging this, is not enough in order to change situations such as those experienced in our current university environment. Experiencing the tension of creative loyalty is a profound demand of the spirituality that inspires us. Loyalty is not only expressed by maintaining the names of the institutions, or certain symbols that refer to the long historical tradition of which we wish to remain a part. True loyalty is manifested through new ways of addressing current challenges. Being loyal to our tradition means creatively responding to the signs of the times by relying on the identity that binds us to that tradition.

We are bound to our tradition by what we have called the characteristic humanism in education provided by the Society of Jesus. Our education is humanist in nature because it supports each individual's process, caring for their individuality, while at the same time helping them to step out of themselves to take charge of humanity and open up to transcendence.

By relying on our identity, we seek to bind people's lives to a more humane world, advocating justice and reconciliation among individuals, peoples and the environment. This requires sufficient spiritual and intellectual depth to be able to see people in their own space, while rejoicing in being part of the world's cultural diversity, and engaging in a rewarding interaction with it. Our humanist tradition is inculturated, because it has roots in every place; dialogic, because it relates to other cultures or traditions; and intercultural, because it is enhanced through exchange. This humanism interweaves personal and local relationships with the complexity of the world through an open dialogue between ideas, cultures and religious traditions.

This is why we place the overall education of each individual (and not only their professional education) at the core of our university work. We aspire to being recognised for the human quality of our graduates, not only because of their high standard to operate in a competitive employment market. We do our best to open up new avenues for human reconciliation, at a time in history when entire peoples are having their opportunities for life thwarted. We want to be and build what Jon Sobrino, S.J. calls *people who freely divest of themselves and contribute to everyone's life being more humanely dense*. We seek to educate consistent individuals, who are responsible for themselves, for others and for the earth that we all inhabit.

The entire university community is called upon to embody the identity that ensures creative loyalty within the educational tradition of the Society of Jesus. The University is an educational community composed of researchers, lecturers, employees, workers, authorities, students and graduates. Each person and each category has different, complementary responsibilities in experiencing and conveying the identity that maintains



the tension between loyalty to tradition and credibility to address new situations.

The identity of the universities under the responsibility of the Society of Jesus is not directly related to the number of Jesuits in the university community, but to the ability to share the spirit that moves them, their characteristic way of proceeding and their communion in the shared mission. We hope that many Jesuits will undertake the multiple dimensions of the complex university task, as companions to the many people called upon to pursue this fruitful educational tradition within a spirit of creative loyalty. But above all, we want to have many companions with whom to move our university's responsibilities forward.

We have been sent to engage in efforts at the university as a dimension of the reconciliation of all things in Christ. The universities entrusted to the Society of Jesus can be a source of life and give life because they have received that gift from Him who sacrificed his own life. Being aware of the missionary spirit involved in university work, preserving it and developing it is a source of intellectual and pedagogical fertility, and witnessing the service these universities provide to society, as a dimension of 'Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation' (Mark 16:15).

The \_\_\_\_\_ incorporated in our identity inspires us to contribute to doing more from the university and to better fulfil its mission. Let me mention two current challenges of the \_\_\_\_\_ university of the Society of Jesus. The first one lies in overcoming the geographic and social boundaries within which our university institutions operate. We have been sent to those places that are not easy to reach, and which others have avoided. The university education provided by the Society of Jesus seeks to be open to all and has been particularly called upon to reach out to the marginalised or impoverished, to refugees and to those who have been displaced due to the unfair social relations that prevail in today's world. The new historical era of knowledge has given us the educational means to reach remote or socially marginalised locations. A few months ago, I was able to share in the smiles of a group of young people in the north of Sri Lanka who graduated thanks to the joint efforts of the Jesuit community in the area and to Jesuit Worldwide Learning. I am sure that many of you have had similar experiences in refugee camps, rural areas or deprived neighbourhoods in the major cities around the world... A sign of the times that challenges us to put into practice a spirituality inspired by the \_\_\_\_\_ How much more and how much better can we do in this direction?

The second challenge has been handed to us by the 36th General Congregation, by inviting us to promote a culture of safeguarding vulnerable people. This may be the most complex mandate given by the 36th to the Apostolic body of the Society of Jesus. Causing a cultural change to the extent necessary to create a safe and healthy environment for each and every human being is a long-term endeavour that requires careful discernment and profound reflection on the best that we can do by using our charism and our abilities. Promoting this cultural change entails touching on the unjust

structures of current societies, with all the risks involved. A safeguarding culture is particularly epitomised by respect for Human Rights. Universities promote cultural changes. This challenge provides an opportunity to engage in specific and long-term work towards expanding the important dimension of reconciliation and justice and a full life. I have asked the Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology of the Society of Jesus to coordinate the efforts of the entire apostolic body in this direction.

The GC 36 provides some guidelines as to the steps to take for enhancing the outcomes of the university, as a source of life and reconciliation:

The universities are a particular expression of the international and multicultural nature of the apostolic body of the Society, and are in the midst of a fragmented and divided world. Through discernment, the universities open up to the possibility of getting in touch with the source of life that they seek to convey, and gaining the freedom necessary to follow the current of life that emerges from the same source. Discernment keeps us in contact with the dreams of a better world to which research, knowledge, teaching and social impact are oriented. Discernment guides and gives meaning to the plan for the best use of the available resources to achieve the university's goals.

A university as an institution can only operate through collaboration. That is why we insist on calling it a university community. We all know that there is still much to do to further the collaboration efforts both within the university and between the different universities, considering the multiple possibilities that open up to it.

Collaboration is conceived as being part of the identity of the universal apostolic body by the General Congregations of the Society of Jesus after the Second Vatican Council. We are aware that we are a minor Society that collaborates with something much greater than ourselves that does not depend on us. As an apostolic body, we attempt to provide our best possible collaboration to the mission of justice and reconciliation in which we are partnered with the members of the Church and all people of good will who are determined to humanise history and look after the Common House. From this perspective, the university is a collaborator in the most complex and comprehensive mission entrusted to the Society of Jesus, which has a concept of itself as being at the service of the reconciled life.

Collaboration is also a key feature in the way of proceeding in daily university life. We strongly emphasise the need for team work and promote a

leadership that foments this and makes the most of it to achieve a better, more efficient use of available resources, and even to multiply those resources. However, there is a long way ahead of us to incorporate this way of proceeding more profoundly into each of the universities. The purpose is to substantially improve the collaboration between the universities and also with other institutions, projects and groups that seek to attain the same goals.

By using the current means available, collaboration can be increased and become more efficient through networking. This involves a culture of generosity, which overcomes the tendency to look after and increase resources only for the use of each individual university. The culture of generosity is at the basis of better and greater achievements and of a full life. The subjects of the university apostolate of the Society of Jesus are educated according to these principles.

This World Meeting of Jesuit Universities, held here in Loyola and in Bilbao, is seeking to make history on this path of discernment, in apostolic planning, collaboration and networking, by creating the long-prepared Meeting of the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU), whereby we can welcome a new era and a new style of fruitful work within the university. With our presence here we confirm that we are willing to come together in order to produce better and greater outcomes. This willingness will turn into a specific commitment to new ways of interrelating within and between our universities.

We have travelled a long journey which is full of achievements, but where we have faced numerous challenges. This journey is already several centuries long and the intention is for it to continue for much longer. In order to take the next steps on the path ahead, which are as yet unknown to us just as the previous ones were, we believe that we should come together and make the most of who we are and what we have, so as to become a source for a full, reconciled life.