

## Decree 2: SERVANTS OF CHRIST'S MISSION

- 15 1. As the Society of Jesus, we are servants of Christ's mission. In the thirty years since General Congregation 31, and particularly in the twenty years since General Congregation 32, the Society has felt both the strength of the Crucified and Risen Christ and its own weakness: this has been a time of testing for us, but also a time of great grace. Our many faults we know and confess; our graces are more important because they come from Christ. Some have left us to serve the Lord in other ways of life; others, shaken by the events of this period, have a weakened confidence in the quality of our vocation. But we have also become, in a resilient way, a community of "friends in the Lord," supporting one another in the freedom which Christian love brings, deeply affected by the deaths of our Jesuit martyrs in this period. In these years, throughout the Society, we have been purified in the faith by which we live, and have grown in our understanding of our central mission. Our service, especially among the poor, has deepened our life of faith, both individually and as a body: our faith has become more paschal, more compassionate, more tender, more evangelical in its simplicity.
- 16 2. The Society has also become a body more diverse than ever before, engaged in a variety of ministries at the crossroads of cultural conflict, social and economic struggles, religious revivalism and new opportunities for bringing the Good News to peoples all over the world.
- 17 – Jesuits in Africa are engaged in the challenge of building up a young and vibrant African Church, rooted in the richness of different cultures, creating new bonds of solidarity among their peoples and struggling to overcome the global forces that tend to marginalize the whole continent.
- 18 – Jesuits in Asia and Oceania are engaged in the struggles of the poor and the indigenous peoples for justice; especially in Asian countries where Christians are a small minority, they dialogue with other cultural and religious traditions in an effort to put the Gospel in touch with Asian life and to bring the richness of Asian culture to the living of the Gospel.
- 19 – Jesuits in Latin America, confronted by societies in which there are huge disparities between the lives of rich and poor, continue to stand with the poor as they work for the justice of the Kingdom. They also enable the voices of the poor to teach the Church about the Gospel, drawing upon the rich faith of the people and of indigenous cultures.
- 20 – Jesuits in former Communist countries, after long years of harassment and imprisonment for their faith, are helping their people in their search for an authentic way of living in a regained freedom.
- 21 – Jesuits in Western Europe, through a range of educational, spiritual and pastoral ministries, are helping to maintain the vitality of faith and of Christian communities in the face of religious indifference. They also strive in a variety of ways to accompany and help those who are at the margins of society.
- 22 – Jesuits in North America are dealing with the challenges of new forms of cultural and economic deprivation. They work in close cooperation with many others in trying to influence the complex structures of society where decisions are made and values are shaped.
- 23 All of us are engaged in the Society's mission in ways appropriate to the varied

contexts in which we work. For we have one mission, shared by priests and brothers, and many ministries which we undertake as a service of Jesus Christ and his work of reconciling the world to God.

24 3. The Church, whose mission we share, exists not for itself but for humanity, bearing the proclamation of God's love and casting light on the inner gift of that love. Its aim is the realization of the Kingdom of God in the whole of human society, not only in the life to come, but also in this life. We exercise our Jesuit mission within the total evangelizing mission of the Church.<sup>1</sup> This mission is "a single but complex reality which develops in a variety of ways:" through the integral dimensions of life witness, proclamation, conversion, inculturation, the genesis of local churches, dialogue and the promotion of the justice willed by God.<sup>2</sup> Within this framework, in accordance with our charism, our tradition and the approval and encouragement of Popes through the years, the contemporary Jesuit mission is the service of faith and the promotion in society of "that justice of the Gospel which is the embodiment of God's love and saving mercy."<sup>3</sup>

25 4. When Ignatius was confirmed in his mission at La Storta, the Eternal Father said to Christ, "I want you to take this man as your servant:" it was at the will of the Father that Jesus Christ, carrying his Cross as a standard of victory, took Ignatius as servant of his mission, to labour with him under that same Cross until his work is accomplished. It is a vision which confirms the call which Christ, the Eternal King, extends in the Spiritual Exercises:

"Whoever wishes to come with me has to be content with the same food I eat, and the drink, and the clothing which I wear, and so forth. So too each one must labour with me during the day, and keep watch in the night, and so on, so that later each one may have a part with me in the victory, just as each has shared in the toil."<sup>4</sup>

26 Ignatius, and all those called to this service, are taught to be companions in hardship with Christ in his ministry. In the Spiritual Exercises, we contemplate the mission of Christ as a response of the Blessed Trinity to the sins which afflict the world. We contemplate the Incarnate Son born in poverty, labouring to bring the Kingdom through word and deed, and finally suffering and dying out of love for all men and women. In the pedagogy of the Exercises, Jesus invites us to see in his earthly life the pattern of the mission of the Society: to preach in poverty, to be free from family ties, to be obedient to the will of God, to enter his struggle against sin with complete generosity of heart. As the Risen Lord, he is now present in all who suffer, all who are oppressed, all whose lives are broken by sin. As he is present, so we too want to be present, in solidarity and compassion, where the human family is most damaged. The Jesuit mission, as a service of the Crucified and Risen Lord, is always an entry into the saving work of the Cross in a world still marked by brutality and evil. As companions of Jesus, our identity is inseparable from our mission. Nadal makes it clear that, for Ignatius, although the Risen Christ is now in glory, through the Cross he is present in the suffering which continues in the world for which he died:

"Christ, having risen from the dead, and dying now no more (Rom 6:9), still suffers in his members, and constantly carries his Cross so that he said to Paul, 'Why do

<sup>1</sup>Cf. John Paul II, Allocution to General Congregation 34, 5 January 1995, nn. 2 and 9; cf. Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup>John Paul II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 41.

<sup>3</sup>GC 33, D 1, n. 32. In other places in this present decree, this justice is also described as "the justice willed by God," "the justice of God's Kingdom," and God's "justice in the world."

<sup>4</sup>*SpEx* [93].

you persecute me?"<sup>5</sup>

- 27 5. Saint Ignatius was clear that, as the Society was not instituted by human means, so its ministries are preserved and fostered only by the all-powerful hand of Christ.<sup>6</sup> Thus, as we receive our mission from Christ, whatever fruitfulness it bears is entirely dependent on his grace. And it is the Risen Christ who calls and empowers us for his service under the banner of the Cross:
- 28 – The Risen Christ, far from being absent from the world's history, has begun a new presence to the world in the Spirit. He is now present to all men and women and draws them into his Paschal Mystery. He continues to mediate God's work of bringing salvation, justice and reconciliation to a world that is still broken by its sins.
- 29 – The Risen Christ who calls us is the first-born from the dead, the first of many brothers and sisters who, through his love, will enter God's embrace. He is the loving and healing presence among us, ensuring that the scars of brutality and death will not always disfigure our human history. His death on the tree of the Cross bears fruit that continues to be "for the healing of the nations" (Rev 22:2).
- 30 – The Risen Christ fulfils God's promises to the Jewish people and continues to bring all peoples together with them, to create one new humanity in the Spirit, uniting them in one living body (Eph 2:15-16). In him, all human hostilities are healed.
- 31 6. The mission of the Society derives from our continuing experience of the Crucified and Risen Christ who invites us to join him in preparing the world to become the completed Kingdom of God. The focus of Christ's mission is the prophetic proclamation of the Gospel that challenges people in the name of the Kingdom of his Father; we are to preach that Kingdom in poverty. He calls us to be at the very heart of the world's experience as it receives this promise of the Kingdom and is brought to receive God's gift in its fullness. It is still an experience of the Cross, in all its anguish and with all its power, because the enigmas of sin and death are still part of the reality of the world. He calls us "to help men and women disengage themselves from the tarnished and confused image that they have of themselves in order to discover that they are, in God's light, completely like Christ."<sup>7</sup> And so we undertake all our ministries with a confidence that the Lord takes us, as he did Ignatius, as his servants – not because we are strong, but because he says to us, as he said to St Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).

## The graces Christ gives

- 32 7. The Risen Christ's call to us to join him in labouring for the Kingdom is always accompanied by his power. A particular grace was given to the Society when GC 32 spoke of our mission today as "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement."<sup>8</sup> This description of the main focus of our work and spirituality and its integrating principle is grounded in the Formula of the Institute which, after speaking of the purpose of the Society – "to strive especially for the defence and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine" – identifies a range of activities which

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<sup>5</sup>MHSI, *Ignatiana* s. IV, p. 314.

<sup>6</sup>*Const.* [812].

<sup>7</sup>Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Discourse to General Congregation 34, 6 January 1995; cf. Appendix II.2.

<sup>8</sup>GC 32, D 4, n. 2.

mediate this goal: ministries of the Word and ministries of interiority; ministries of sacramental service; teaching catechism to children and the unlettered. Finally, pointing to the centrality of the works of mercy in Christian life, it opens up a horizon of social ministries to be exercised by a Jesuit on behalf of those in need:

"Moreover, he should show himself no less useful in reconciling the estranged, in holily assisting and serving those who are found in prisons and hospitals, and indeed in performing other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good."<sup>9</sup>

- 33 8. The commitment of the Society to a radical life of faith that finds expression in the promotion of justice for all derives its inspiration from this foundational declaration in the Apostolic Letter of Pope Julius III. We have recovered, for our contemporary mission, the centrality of working in solidarity with the poor in accord with our Ignatian charism. As though with new eyes, we read, as a prophetic text for our time, what Polanco under Ignatius' guidance wrote to the community at Padua in 1547:

"So great are the poor in the sight of God that it was especially for them that Jesus Christ was sent into the world: 'By reason of the misery of the needy and the groans of the poor, now will I arise, says the Lord' (Ps 11:6). And elsewhere, 'He has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor' (Lk 4:18), a word which our Lord recalls when he tells them to give an answer to St John, 'The poor have the Gospel preached to them' (Mt 11:5). Our Lord so preferred the poor to the rich that he chose the entire college of his apostles from among the poor, to live and associate with them, to make them princes of his Church and set them up as judges of the twelve tribes of Israel — that is, of all the faithful — and the poor will be his counsellors. To such a degree has he exalted the state of poverty! Friendship with the poor makes us friends of the eternal King."<sup>10</sup>

- 34 9. Being "friends of the Lord," then, means being "friends with the poor," and we cannot turn aside when our friends are in need. We are a community in solidarity with them because of Christ's preferential love for them. We understand more clearly that the sinfulness of the world, which Christ came to heal, reaches in our time a pitch of intensity through social structures which exclude the poor — the majority of the world's population — from participation in the blessings of God's creation. We see that oppressive poverty breeds a systemic violence against the dignity of men, women, children and the unborn which cannot be tolerated in the Kingdom willed by God. These are the signs of the times which call us to realize that "God has always been the God of the poor because the poor are the visible proof of a failure in the work of creation."<sup>11</sup>

- 35 10. Pope John Paul II speaks of the pervading "structures of sin," particularly characterized by "the all-consuming desire for profit and the thirst for power" in all cultures. Because the life of the spirit is inseparable from social relations, he calls on people of all faiths and none to become aware of "the urgent need to change the spiritual attitudes which define each individual's relationship with self, with neighbour, with even the remotest human

<sup>9</sup>Formula [3].

<sup>10</sup>MHSI, I, 572-7, Letter 186, 7 August 1547. English translation in *Letters of St Ignatius of Loyola*, ed. W. J. Young (Loyola University Press, 1959), p.148.

<sup>11</sup>Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "Our Mission Today and Tomorrow," *Faith Doing Justice: Promoting Solidarity in Jesuit Ministries*, 1991, pp.48-49.

communities, and with nature itself.<sup>12</sup> It is a summons which we, as Jesuits committed to the action of the Holy Spirit both in the human heart and in the world, cannot refuse; consequently, in the conduct of our personal and community lives, and in whatever ministries we undertake – whether works of pastoral service, academic scholarship, spiritual ministry, or education – we will live in ways which look to the fullness of the Kingdom in which justice, and not human sin, will hold sway. In the words of Pope John Paul II:

"Working for the Kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God's activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the Kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. In a word, the Kingdom of God is the manifestation and realization of God's plan of salvation in all its fullness."<sup>13</sup>

- 36 11. Ours is a service of faith and of the radical implications of faith in a world where it is becoming easier to settle for something less than faith and less than justice. We recognize, along with many of our contemporaries, that without faith, without the eye of love, the human world seems too evil for God to be good, for a good God to exist. But faith recognizes that God is acting, through Christ's love and the power of the Holy Spirit, to destroy the structures of sin which afflict the bodies and hearts of his children. Our Jesuit mission touches something fundamental in the human heart: the desire to find God in a world scarred by sin, and then to live by his Gospel in all its implications. This, the instinct to live fully in God's love and thereby to promote a shared, lasting human good, is what we address by our vocation to serve faith and promote the justice of God's Kingdom. Jesus Christ invites us, and through us the people we serve, to move, in conversion of heart, "from solidarity with sin to solidarity with him for humanity,"<sup>14</sup> and to promote the Kingdom in all its aspects.
- 37 12. This faith in God is inescapably social in its implications, because it is directed towards the ways in which people relate to one another and how society should be ordered. In many parts of the world, we see social and moral disintegration. When a society has no moral and spiritual basis, the result is conflicting ideologies of hatreds which provoke nationalistic, racial, economic and sexual violence. This in turn multiplies the abuses that breed resentment and conflict, and locks groups into an aggressive fundamentalism which can tear the fabric of society apart from within. Society then falls prey to the powerful and the manipulative, the demagogue and the liar; it becomes the centre of social and moral corruption.
- 38 13. But a faith that looks to the Kingdom generates communities which counter social conflict and disintegration. From faith comes the justice willed by God, the entry of the human family into peace with God and with one another. It is not exploitative propaganda but religious faith, as the inspiration of the human and social good found in God's Kingdom, that alone can take the human family beyond decline and destructive conflict. If wrongs are to be acknowledged and resolved, then possessiveness, chauvinism and the manipulation of power have to be challenged by communities grounded in religious charity, the charity of the Suffering Servant, the self-sacrificing love shown by the Saviour. The community which Christ creates by his death challenges the world to believe, to act justly, to speak respectfully to one another of serious things, to transform its systems of relations, to take Christ's commandments as the basis of its life.

<sup>12</sup>John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, nn. 36-38.

<sup>13</sup>John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 15.

<sup>14</sup>Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "Our Mission Today and Tomorrow," *op. cit.*, p.49.

## The dimensions of our mission

- 39 14. We reaffirm what is said in Decree 4 of GC 32: "The service of faith and the promotion of justice cannot be for us simply one ministry among others. It must be the integrating factor of all our ministries; and not only of our ministries but also of our inner life as individuals, as communities, and as a world-wide brotherhood."<sup>15</sup> The aim of our mission received from Christ, as presented in the Formula of the Institute, is the service of faith.<sup>16</sup> The integrating principle of our mission is the inseparable link between faith and the promotion of the justice of the Kingdom. In this present Congregation we want to deepen and extend, in a more explicit way, the Society's awareness of those integral dimensions of our mission to which Decree 4 drew attention and which are now reaching maturity in our experience and in our present ministries. We have found that whenever our ministries are conducted most fruitfully, these elements are present.
- 40 15. Decree 4, having made its central affirmation about the inseparability of the service of faith and the promotion of justice, then speaks of "our mission to evangelize,"<sup>17</sup> particularly through dialogue with members of other religious traditions, and through the engagement with culture which is essential for an effective presentation of the Gospel. Thus the aim of our mission (the service of faith) and its integrating principle (faith directed towards the justice of the Kingdom) are dynamically related to the inculturated proclamation of the Gospel and dialogue with other religious traditions as integral dimensions of evangelization. The integrating principle extends its influence into these dimensions which, like branches growing from the one tree, form a matrix of integral features within our one mission of the service of faith and the promotion of justice.
- 41 16. In our experience since GC 32, we have come to see that our service of faith, directed towards the justice of God's Kingdom, cannot avoid these other dimensions of dialogue and presence within cultures. The proclamation of the Gospel in a particular context ought always to address its cultural, religious and structural features, not as a message that comes from outside, but as a principle that, from within, "animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about 'a new creation.'"<sup>18</sup>
- 42 17. In our positive approach to religions and cultures, we recognize that all of them – including the "Christian West" throughout its history – have also found ways of being closed to the true freedom offered by God. Justice can truly flourish only when it involves the transformation of culture, since the roots of injustice are embedded in cultural attitudes as well as in economic structures. The dialogue between the Gospel and culture has to take place within the heart of the culture. It should be conducted among people who regard each other with respect, and who look together towards a shared human and social freedom. In this way, too, the Gospel comes to be seen in a new light; its meaning is enriched, renewed, even transformed. Through dialogue the Gospel itself, the Word ever ancient and ever new, enters the minds and hearts of the human family.
- 43 18. There cannot, in short, be an effective proclamation of the Kingdom unless the Gospel, having been brought to the very centre of a society, touches its structural, cultural and

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<sup>15</sup>GC 32, D 2, n. 9.

<sup>16</sup>"... founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the defence and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine..." (*Formula* [3]).

<sup>17</sup>GC 32, D 4, n. 24.

<sup>18</sup>Pedro Arrupe, Letter to the Whole Society on Inculturation, AR 17 (1978), p. 257.

religious aspects with its light.

44 – There is effective dialogue with members of other traditions when there is a shared commitment to a transformation of the cultural and social life within which people live.

45 – The transformation of human cultures requires a dialogue with the religions that inspire them and a corresponding engagement with the social conditions that structure them.

46 – If our faith is directed towards God and his justice in the world, this justice cannot be achieved without, at the same time, attending to the cultural dimensions of social life and the way in which a particular culture defines itself with regard to religious transcendence.

47 19. Today we realize clearly:

No service of faith without  
promotion of justice  
entry into cultures  
openness to other religious experiences.

No promotion of justice without  
communicating faith  
transforming cultures  
collaboration with other traditions.

No inculturation without  
communicating faith with others  
dialogue with other traditions  
commitment to justice.

No dialogue without  
sharing faith with others  
evaluating cultures  
concern for justice.

48 20. In the light of Decree 4 and our present experience, we can now say explicitly that our mission of the service of faith and the promotion of justice must be broadened to include, as integral dimensions, proclamation of the Gospel, dialogue, and the evangelization of culture. They belong together within our service of faith – they are "without confusion, without separation" – because they arise out of an obedient attentiveness to what the Risen Christ is doing as he leads the world to the fullness of God's Kingdom. These dimensions within our unified mission develop the insights offered by our most recent Congregations and the Society's apostolic experience in many parts of the world. Here, there is a profound, and Spirit-inspired, instance of *sentire cum ecclesia in missione*, appropriate to the ways in which our charism enriches the Church's evangelizing mission.

49 21. In the light of these reflections, we can now say of our contemporary mission that the faith that does justice is, inseparably, the faith that engages other traditions in dialogue, and the faith that evangelizes culture.