

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

## **The university as a source of a reconciled life**

Through its commitment to the university, the Society seeks to contribute to turn the word of Jesus into a historical truth: *...I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly* (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.

Living fully means plunging into the broad range of skins and cultures that make up humanity. It involves delving into the complexity of the historical and social processes currently underway. Deep, complex processes of change, which take place at different paces and fill us with uncertainty in the face of a future that is increasingly difficult to imagine ... The university that we seek, as a source of life, deeply committed to the processes of reconciliation, experiences in its own daily existence the tensions of the social and cultural complexity into which it is inserted with all its being. The university also lives in the uncertainty of the historical period in which it operates, and experiences in its own being the fragility of life, because it feels and knows itself to be fragile.

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.

### **Where do we come to and what is our purpose**

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

University, Melbourne, in 2015 These physical locations allow us to create the spiritual space in which we find ourselves as educators and collaborators in the mission of humanising history from our place at the university.

Therefore, we came to this physical location, the University of Deusto and the Shrine of Loyola, because it is also the spiritual place where we feel that we can grow within the universal dimension of the contribution of the universities, inspired by the Ignatian charism to strive for the betterment of humanity through reconciliation and justice.

We came, therefore, to become strengthened as a universal apostolic body inspired by the Ignatian charism, united by a fruitful humanist intellectual tradition, rooted in the Christian faith. We came to share our view on history and on the world that we find in the Gospel and the Spiritual Exercises. To look at the world and at history with the love of the One and Triune God means to be moved by the cry of the millions of human beings who migrate seeking better living conditions; of the victims of violence; of the impoverished who demand justice; of those who are despised for the colour of their skin or the religion they profess; of those who are denied their rights to participate democratically in public life, because political power is monopolised by people at the service of individual interests, indifferent to the Common Good and the protection of the environment.

Adopting this perspective represents a considerable epistemological challenge for our scientific work, which seeks to penetrate reality, discover the roots of injustice and contribute to propose alternatives for economic and social transformation. A perspective that also becomes a pedagogical challenge for our teaching, to ensure that we are capable of transmitting the life that originates from it. From this way of seeing, of placing ourselves vis-à-vis reality, we embody the preferential option for the poor, by which the university becomes a *project of social transformation* to generate a full life.

This challenge takes on new dimensions when we think of them as a global transformation. The commitment to the transformation of the world today has a local, regional and global scope. These are complex and interdependent processes. We came, therefore, to find a way, together, to go beyond what we normally achieve in our local societies, to have the best possible impact on our world, at regional and global levels.

When the university is conceived as *project of social transformation*, it moves towards the margins of human history, where it finds those who are discarded by the dominant structures and powers. It is a university that opens its doors and windows to the margins of society. Alongside them comes a new breath of life that makes the efforts of social transformation a source of life and fulfilment.

## **A just and peaceful life**

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.

*Our educational apostolates at all levels, and our centres for communication and social research, should help form men and women committed to reconciliation and able to confront obstacles to reconciliation and propose solutions. The intellectual apostolate should be strengthened to help in the transformation of our cultures and societies.<sup>1</sup>*

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 profound change of the human cultural paradigm. A challenge to the creativity of the educational tradition of the Society of Jesus, called upon to bring to this new world the good news of humanity reconciled in Jesus through his life given for love.

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<sup>1</sup> GC 36, D. 1, n. 34.

The University as a human institution, and the university apostolate of the Society of Jesus have been able to creatively confront difficult and complex historical periods by being loyal to their charism, their *raison d'être*. The University is a community of spiritual interests committed to the search for truth. The University recognises itself in the *search for the truth* because it is convinced that human beings can access it. The University is always open to critically recognising the provisional nature of knowledge by which it seeks to formulate the truth and to continue the incessant task of finding it.

The Catholic University is intimately committed to the search for truth. As Pope Benedict XVI recalled in Havana:<sup>2</sup> *God created man with an innate commitment to the truth, which is why He gave him his ability to reason. Certainly, it is not irrationality but rather the yearning for truth which the Christian faith promotes. Each human being has to seek the truth and choose to follow it when he or she finds it, despite the potential sacrifices involved.*

The Society of Jesus has found in the University a formidable space to put into practice the mission received from and inspired by the Gospel, to determinedly promote social justice and environmental sustainability through dialogue with cultures and religions. The University promotes processes of knowledge creation and accompanies processes of human education in which, together with knowledge, it transmits the meaning of a reconciled and peaceful life.

Ours is a time marked by the tension between secularism and religious and ideological fundamentalisms, in which the *Catholic* presence in the university takes on a new meaning. The university is a diverse environment in which the conditions for dialogue and in-depth understanding of historical, personal and intellectual processes are produced. It is a privileged space for exercising human freedom. Freedom to *search and find* the paths of social transformation through research and teaching. It is a space in which the message of liberation of the Good News of the Gospel can contribute to finding better ways to generate life in the midst of difficulties and uncertainty, which seem to overwhelm the daily lives of most men and women, opening a space for hope to enter.

### **The Intellectual Apostolate is seeking *Wisdom***

For the university institutions run by the Society of Jesus it is not enough to reach the intellectual depth to develop knowledge and transmit it as an element of overall human education. The real challenge is that it should be an *apostolate*, that is, a way to more effectively announce the Good News of the Gospel, to learn to grasp the presence of God in the world and the action of his Spirit in history in order to join in it and contribute to human liberation.

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<sup>2</sup> Eucharist held on 28 March, 2012.

Through the intellectual apostolate we associate ourselves with the creative work of the Lord, the word by which all things were made.<sup>3</sup> A University under the responsibility of the Society of Jesus is therefore called upon, to create. This creative ability is demonstrated above all in its ability to anticipate its time, to be several steps ahead. A university capable of seeing beyond the present because it cultivates and finds its nourishment in an inspiring and illuminating historical memory.

The University is a privileged space to develop the intellectual dimension present in all apostolic actions undertaken by the Society of Jesus. We know that intellectual depth does not arise spontaneously, nor is the label of university or research centre enough to acquire it. Intellectual work requires arid effort and dedication that challenge the will of those who engaged in it. It requires sensitivity to the situations of individuals and peoples. It needs to look beyond its walls to accompany the complex processes of human history.

Moreover, it is not enough to achieve intellectual depth, but rather to endow it with meaning, beyond itself, as a contribution to improving the world. Intellectual work is apostolate when it is carried out in the open, not locked in a cabinet or within the comfort of its own certainties. When we are able to engage in a dialogue with other disciplines, allowing our position to be enhanced by other perspectives and diverse worldviews, by science and by culture. When it is not enclosed in its supposed truth. When it is experienced as a mission, as having been sent to contribute to the liberation of the world. Therefore, it is carried out as a service that does not seek the recognition or glory of people or institutions, but the greater glory of God.

This is how it involves seeking Wisdom, as defined by Fr. Adolfo Nicolás: ...*'a superior, comprehensive, profound and transforming kind of knowledge'*. *It is therefore not only scientific knowledge— knowledge about something—but a kind of knowledge that leads the individual to have an attitude of constant search for the big questions and, moreover, which leads the individual to empathy, to be compassionate towards all human beings, and to be respectful of nature as a gift and, even of the Ignatian principle of seeking and finding God in all things.*<sup>4</sup>

Wisdom exists through its embodiment in *wise people* who make it present among us. Wisdom is not an accumulation of knowledge that is housed in a person's brain or in books, virtual memories, libraries or mega servers. Wisdom is an attribute that is recognised in those people whose degree of human, affective and intellectual maturity means that meeting allows us to see beyond the ordinary in our surroundings and within ourselves. Being a wise person is, then, a question of love, of seeking that *wisdom* that wants to be found in history and in creation.

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<sup>3</sup> Jn 1,1-4

<sup>4</sup> University of Deusto, *Lectio Inauguralis*, 9 September, 2011.

The intellectual apostolate directs us towards the wisdom involved in the *discernment* by which we become capable of perceiving where God is in the worldwide, global and local situation. This enables us to choose what is best for the glory of God, that is, for a full human life. This reflection puts us before the inescapable question of whether the University creates and maintains the spaces for discernment in the form of an ordinary way of making decisions.

### **University education aimed at universal citizenship**

Citizenship is the dimension by which a human being is understood as being part of a complex relationship with the other human beings that make up the human community. It is known as an integral and participatory part of the 'city' (hence 'citizen'), of the 'polis' (hence, 'political'). Citizenship, therefore, involves identifying with something that is greater than the self, that is more encompassing than the individual's own interests, which are always partial and narrow. The awareness of citizens opens the eyes of individuals to the broad horizon of the community, of society, of the environment. It places them within the perspective of the common good and of personal responsibility for that which is collective, for the *res publica*, what is of interest and of benefit to the whole community.

Therefore, citizenship is that facet of our human existence through which the individual becomes a person by recognizing others as their equals in terms of dignity and rights; they are no longer inferior and despicable beings, who must be eliminated because they do not deserve to be among us, or competitors or potential enemies to be eliminated because they are a threat. Citizens' awareness leads us to see others as people who, because of their diversity, contribute to the common life of all, as companions on the way, necessary for everyone to have a full life.

Globalisation, a characteristic of the change of an era, drives ambiguous processes. Some scholars who have studied this phenomenon distinguish between *globalisation* and *world citizenship*.<sup>5</sup> *Globalisation* is the tendency to standardise human behaviour and cultures as a consequence of the change of historical period and reduces cultural diversity. It is the tendency to create a monocultural global space. Those forms of economic organisation and socio-political interaction that are ultimately favourable to the transnational capital, dominant in this globalisation scheme, are intended to be imposed everywhere.

*World citizenship* is the tendency to recognise the human creativity in the cultural diversity that constitutes the main source of wealth in the process of the exponential growth of the human exchange throughout the planet. From this point of view, universalisation is understood as the growth of the interaction between culturally diverse human groups that are capable of sharing a common vision of the interests of all humanity. Beyond conceptual

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<sup>5</sup> This distinction cannot be made clearly in all languages.

or terminological distinctions, what is interesting to make clear here is the need to discern the tendencies and possible outcomes of globalising currents to promote those that produce a full life.

Globalisation-world citizenship has multiplied migratory flows throughout the world. If the growth in human mobility is dominated by the standardising tendency of cultures, its consequence would be a gradual restriction of cultural exchange, which may even put multiculturalism at risk. This phenomenon may be similar to the impact that the deterioration of the environment has had on the decrease of biodiversity on the planet. In contrast, the universalising trends would multiply the opportunities of multicultural spaces and promote opportunities for interculturality. It would also provide an opportunity for the contribution of the spiritual experience of religions as a dimension of cultures, thus promoting the overcoming of fundamentalisms. In 2008, the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus expressed it this way:

*We live in a world of many religions and cultures. The erosion of traditional religious beliefs and the tendency to homogenise cultures has strengthened a variety of forms of religious fundamentalism. Faith in God is increasingly being used by some to divide people and communities, to create polarities and tensions which tear at the very fabric of our common social life. All these changes call us to the frontiers of culture and of religion.<sup>6</sup>*

Educating people for world citizenship involves recognising diversity as a constitutive dimension of a full human life. This means experiencing cultural diversity as an opportunity for the enrichment of human beings. We want to educate human beings who are able to feel that they are members of humanity because they have become critically aware of their own culture (inculturation); who are capable of joyfully recognising the culture of other human beings (multiculturalism) and relating to others, becoming enhanced by the variety of which their own culture is a part (interculturality). Interpreted in this way, universality can provide the impetus for social justice, fraternity and peace.

Becoming world citizens would be one of the outcomes to be achieved from studying or working in an educational institution of the Society of Jesus. It is one of the constituting dimensions of the individual, which we seek to foment and support during the educational process. It is also necessary in order to lay down the conditions to be able to listen to the call to provide a public service as a personal commitment. Being called upon to make a direct commitment in politics involves placing oneself at the service of reconciliation and justice, and is both complex and necessary. Making this a possibility in some people's lives is part of our educational endeavour. Supporting the education of those who choose to serve through politics is one of the most important contributions we can make to the betterment of human societies worldwide.

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<sup>6</sup> GC 35. Decree 3, n. 22

### **Our identity is our contribution**

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 *magis* 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 *poor with Spirit*, 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 *magis* 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 *magis* 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 *magis*. 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.

### **Collaborative work yields more fruitful results**

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:

*Discernment, collaboration and networking offer three important perspectives on our contemporary way of proceeding. As the Society of Jesus is an 'international and multicultural body' in a complex, 'fragmented and divided world', attention to these perspectives helps to streamline governance and make it more flexible and apostolically effective.*

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.