

# **INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS FOR JESUIT EDUCATION DELEGATES**

## ***JESEDU-Rio2017***

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017

### **Jesuit Education: Forming Human Beings in Harmony with their Fellows, with Creation and with God.**

#### **Introduction**

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to those who have made this Congress possible: FLACSI, the Province of Brazil, the Brazilian network of Jesuit schools and the Secretary for Secondary and Pre-Secondary Education of the General Curia. I would also like to express my gratitude to you, delegates, for your hard work in your provinces and here at the Congress.

This is the first time that the Society of Jesus organizes a Congress for provincial education delegates and the regional networks that support our educational work in secondary and pre-secondary schools. It has been a beautiful opportunity to come together and strengthen our common universal vision of the Society's educational apostolate.

Other Ignatian networks that offer quality education to marginalized sectors of society have also participated in this Congress, like Fe y Alegría, the Cristo Rey Jesuit Schools, the Nativity schools from the United States and the Jesuit Refugee Service's educational program.

In the name of the Society, I would like to acknowledge the enormous task that all of you, together with your colleagues in this apostolate, carry out every day in extremely diverse and difficult circumstances to offer new generations training that will radically change their lives, offering them instruments to contribute to the humanization of the world.

This Congress is an expression of the thanks we give to God and our benefactors in this area, an affirmation of the importance of the educational apostolate and a push to seek the audacity of the impossible that can carry us even further.

#### **I. Our educational tradition: an inspiration, not a burden**

Education, and schools in particular, are part of the Society's missionary tradition. It all began with the perception that Ignatius and his first companions had of their immense apostolic potential. Polanco portrayed this early conviction by the Society in his 15 reasons for having schools.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Monumenta Ignatiana, Vol. 4, p. 7-8

Through these schools, the Society created an educational model rooted in the humanist tradition of the Renaissance, convinced that by educating individuals' character towards the common good they were carrying out an important apostolic task. When they realized how education could touch the hearts of individuals, they transformed the *cura personalis* into the defining characteristic of their educational model. The spirituality that emanated from the Exercises then became the spirit driving perception of the world, human beings and destiny.

With the Second Vatican Council and the formulation of the Society's mission at GC 31 (1965) and 32 (1975), our schools were profoundly renewed.

That humanist tradition, nurtured by Ignatian spirituality, was expressed prophetically and lucidly by Fr. Arrupe and by Fr. Kolvenbach, who stated that the purpose of our education is to train *men and women for others and with others*.<sup>2</sup>

Later, the Society expanded on this educational objective in the so-called 4 Cs, which stated that we are looking for human excellence in our students by training them to be men and women of conscience, competence, compassion and commitment. Thus, academic excellence, a fundamental dimension in Jesuit schools, was placed within the context of training for integral human excellence. It is this integral human excellence that gives purpose to academic excellence.

Our educational offering has also been renewed through an education for faith that promotes justice, encouraging dialogue between cultures and collaboration between laypeople and Jesuits. Sharing educational charisma with laypeople and religious men and women from other families has been a source of creative renewal of our educational model. New institutional models, born to offer quality education to the poor and excluded, such as Fe y Alegria, Cristo Rey, or Nativity Schools, in addition to the educational services offered by the JRS, enrich the Society of Jesus' educational apostolate in the world.

In addition, the creation of provincial and regional networks has improved the reach of our institutions. Our practice of permanent educational discernment was put into motion by a three-stage cycle (of which this Congress is the last step in an initial stage) that began in 2012 with the Boston Colloquium and continued in 2014 with the SIPEI in Manresa.

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<sup>2</sup> "It would be an error to expect that this Lyceum... were just the continuation of what Jesuit schools were in past centuries or decades. It's not a matter of re-editing the past, or importing models from elsewhere... It's a matter of responding with imagination and creativity to the challenges that today's world... places before our education." In: *El P. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ y la Educación*, Bogotá, ACODESI, 2009. Speech at the Gathering on Education. The Commitment of the Society of Jesus in the Education Sector. Gdynia, Polonia, October 10, 1998 p. 297.

The online *Educate Magis* platform, which allows all our schools to understand and to develop the immense international potential in our hands, is another opportunity to renew and deepen the charisma of the Society of Jesus' educational apostolate.

The Superior Generals and the General Congregations of the Society of Jesus since the Second Vatican Council have recognized the enormous value of the educational apostolate and its contribution to the mission of the Society.<sup>3</sup> On my part, I would like to take advantage of the opportunity presented by this important gathering to ratify my esteem, and that of the apostolic body of the Society of Jesus, for this apostolate. I would also like to underline its importance in the current context of the world, and our service to the mission of reconciliation, a result of the justice that brings about the peace that God carries out through Christ.

## **II. Companions in a mission of reconciliation and justice**

Education and, in particular, our educational institutions, are part of the human effort to bring about the germination of the seed of the Kingdom of God in history. As we've contemplated in the meditation on the incarnation of the Spiritual Exercises (n° 102), the triune God has committed deeply to the redemption of humanity; when he sees and hears the cry of humans, he returns it to us as a *calling, invitation or interpellation* to collaborate in his commitment to redemption.

The 36<sup>th</sup> General Congregation took up this interpellation and confirmed that we're called to be *companions in a mission of universal reconciliation and justice*, born of the merciful love of God and put in motion by Him through the incarnation, so that all human beings can live in peace, with full lives and in harmony with the environment.

Aware of people's difficult living conditions, we take on reconciliation as a mission of hope. As ministers of reconciliation, we're messengers of hope for the future, called to cure personal wounds, to find new paths for producing goods and models of consumption that respect environmental balance. We seek new paths that generate a change in social relationships to favor improved living conditions for each human being, so that peoples can live in freedom and dignity, and with mutual respect.

Our mission comes from the Christian faith. It is a service of reconciliation and justice born of the life of Christ, and it must be completed in his way, according to the conditions of our world. Reconciliation and justice are but a

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<sup>3</sup> Fr. Arrupe clearly stated that "...For the Church, the educational apostolate is of vital importance. So vital, that prohibiting education is the first –and sometimes the only—measure that certain political regimes impose on the Church to ensure the de-Christianization of the nation within two generations, without spilling blood. Education is necessary. And this can't be carried out on a certain scale and with the excellence I was referring to without a certain type of institutions." (n. 29) in *Nuestros Colegios Hoy y Mañana*, 1980.

single mission. True reconciliation demands justice. Therefore, the search for social justice and the creation of a culture of dialogue between cultures and religions are part of this service of reconciliation among human beings, between human beings and creation and between human beings and God. These three faces of the service of reconciliation are always united. True reconciliation with God is impossible, unless it comes with reconciliation and justice among humans and between humans and creation.

Of course, service of reconciliation and justice means building bridges to allow for dialogue. We know that the task of building bridges, or of “being bridges” in contexts of conflict, means being stepped on by both sides of the fight. That is the price of our service and, as we try and follow Jesus’ example, we’re ready to pay it.

This view of the mission asks us for personal and institutional conversion, it pushes us to rethink our evangelization strategies, how we carry out our pastoral activity, our educational model and how we contribute to the transformation of current social, political and economic relationships that are obstacles to the possibility of a life of dignity for all.

### **III. Education that paves the way for understanding the world we live in.**

The service of reconciliation starts with understanding the world we live in, our home. In addition, the task of the educator, and in particular our educational institutions, is to help younger generations find their place in the world and before God, so that they can project their personal and social development, helping to build a better world.

This need to profoundly understand our world in order to offer the greatest and best service to the Glory of God is why we see our mission as an *intellectual apostolate*. We want to understand human beings and the world in all their complexity, so that human beings can configure the world in a way that is more compassionate, and therefore more divine.

If we make such a great investment in intellectual training, it is because we want Jesuits and our companions in this mission to be capable of understanding and thinking for themselves in each situation or context they face. In truth, we need to be true intellectuals in the world of human and social sciences, in social analysis, in education or in pedagogy, and in each apostolic field we find ourselves in. Simply working in higher education, in a school or in a research center doesn’t make us “intellectuals”. Becoming a “thinker” in a certain discipline requires an ongoing process.

For those that share the mission of the Society of Jesus, being an “intellectual” means being an effective instrument of the apostolate. Being true “intellectuals” in our apostolic mission allows us to understand the world and its challenges, so we can proclaim the Good News in a way that’s

pertinent, attractive and transformative. Education is truly effective when it manages to incorporate this dimension of the intellectual apostolate.

In the intellectual reading of the world and its challenges, the 36<sup>th</sup> General Congregation knew that humanity today has its good and bad points. Nevertheless, the negative aspects are reason for worry, and they show that we're in a profound crisis, in which social relationships, the economy and the environment are all affected, because of the structural injustices and the many abuses committed against human beings and the earth.<sup>4</sup> A quick look at six realities of our world can help us to understand the reach needed for the service of reconciliation and the justice born of the good news proclaimed by Jesus:

First, we are witnesses to unprecedented demographic changes. Millions of people have become migrants or refugees because they're fleeing conflict, natural disasters or poverty, all in search of a better life. Some societies have chosen to welcome them. Others have acted with fear and rage, seeking to build walls or put up barriers.

Second, we are faced by growing inequity. Although the world economic system has created enormous wealth and has allowed some countries to remove large sectors of the population from poverty, inequality is growing at an alarming rate. The distance between the rich and the poor continues to grow, and certain groups, like indigenous peoples, are increasingly marginalized.

Third, polarization and conflict are on the rise. Fanaticism, intolerance, the desire to generate terror, acts of violence and even war are increasing. Although the causes for much of this polarization are based in poverty, fear, ignorance and despair, much of the violence is done in the name of god. The use of religion and the image of god to justify hate and aggression are one of the great antisigns of our time.

Fourth, the ecological crisis that affects our planet, what Pope Francis calls our "common home". His encyclical *Laudato Si* is clear in indicating that the system for producing and consuming followed by humans generates a culture of waste, which significantly deteriorates both our social relationships and the environment, placing the sustainability of our planet for future generations at risk.

Fifth, the expansion of a digital habitat or culture. The Internet and social networks have changed how humans think, react, communicate and interact. It is not just a matter of new technology; it is a new world in which people live, especially the younger generations. It is the beginning of a gigantic cultural transformation that moves at unimaginable speed, that affects personal and intergenerational relationships and challenges traditional cultural values. This "digital ecosystem" or habitat has allowed for the expansion of

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<sup>4</sup> General Congregation 36, decree 1,29

information and solidarity, but it has also generated deep divisions with the viral growth of hate and false news.

Sixth, the weakening of politics as a search for the common good. In many parts of the world, disappointment or disillusionment with politics has grown because of the actions of parties and politicians. Dissatisfaction and discredit have grown as a result of unfulfilled expectations and unresolved problems. This has allowed populist leaders to achieve power taking advantage of the fear and rage of the people, using seductive but unreal proposals for change.

In summary, these six challenges are emblematic of a change in era. More than ever, we are aware of being part of a single human community, that we share a single planet and have a common destiny. Although we experience the phenomenon of “globalization” in many aspects of our everyday lives, perhaps we’re less aware of the many deep and significant changes that will take place in cultures and in the relationship between generations.

#### **IV. Interculturality: global communication among many cultures.**

The planetary trend of intense communication in all areas has resulted in an idea we’ve decided to call globalization. Nevertheless, this is a phenomenon that includes many ambiguous processes. Some Spanish-language researches have chosen to use the terms *globalización* and *mundialización*<sup>5</sup> to identify different dominant tendencies.

When they refer to *globalización*, they mean the tendency to make behaviors and cultures more uniform. One consequence of this is a reduction in cultural diversity, with a tendency to create a global, mono-cultural space, with the economic organization and the forms of sociopolitical interaction that favor transnationalized capital being imposed everywhere. On the other hand, *mundialización* is used to mean the universal recognition of the creativity that is characteristic of cultural diversity, and its recognition as the principal wealth of the exponential process of human interaction across the globe.

As a result, when we try to place our educational activity, it’s best that we refer to *universalization*, understood as the growing interaction among culturally-diverse human groups that are capable of sharing a common vision of the interests of humanity as a whole. This analysis helps us to discern the tendencies existing in a trend of growing human integration and the results of globalizing currents.

The dominance of a globalizing vision that tends to make cultures more uniform will produce a gradual restriction of cultural exchange that might even place multiculturalism at risk. This phenomenon is similar to how damage to the environment is reducing the planet’s biodiversity.

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<sup>5</sup> This distinction can’t be clearly made in all languages.

The predominance of a vision based on *mundialización* will favor multicultural spaces and will open up possibilities for interculturality. Here, the spiritual contribution of religions, understood as dimensions of cultures, will help to overcome fundamentalism. This was predicted by the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation in 2008, when it encouraged us to go to the frontiers of our cultures and religion to find, recognize and take up dialogue with others.<sup>6</sup>

To describe the idea of universality we are seeking in the globalization process, it might be useful to remember the original meaning of the concept of *catholic*, which referred to the universal nature of the Church, including a broad diversity of different situations. It is also useful to remember that Pope Francis preferred to use the geometric image of a *polyhedron* instead of a sphere to refer to globalization.<sup>7</sup> Both the concept of *catholic* and the image of the *polyhedron* adequately include the meaning of *interculturality*.

Ideally, each human being, or each people, should feel like a part of humanity, and be aware of their own culture (enculturation), without making it absolute. They should do so critically, joyfully acknowledging the existence of other human beings with different cultures (multiculturality), and establishing relationships of equality with them, enriching themselves with a diversity of cultures that includes their own (interculturality). *Universality* experienced in this way may become a way of promoting social justice, fraternity and peace.

We can imagine that this vision of human universality corresponds with the spiritual experience of the God of Jesus of Nazareth. The Church, as a community of the followers of Jesus, needed to overcome (not without tension) its local Jewish, Greek and Roman horizons, to step outside its cultural borders and live catholic-ness as universality with local roots. It is not strange, then, that the Second Vatican Council stated that “nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “We live in a world of many religions and cultures. The erosion of traditional religious beliefs and the tendency to homogenize 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.” General Congregation 35, d. 3,22

<sup>7</sup> “I like the geometric figure of the polyhedron, because it is one but has different faces. It expresses how unity is created while preserving the identities of the peoples, of the persons, of the cultures. That is the richness that today we have to give to the process of globalization, because otherwise it is homogenizing and destructive.” Pope Francis, *Dialogue with the members of General Congregation 36*, October 24, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.” GS, n°. 1

The recognition of diverse cultures and the ability to live in multicultural contexts while respecting diversity, or even enjoying it, is an important step. We might be tempted to settle for multiculturalism as an expression of universality. Nevertheless, people from different cultures simply living in harmony, as a juxtaposition, is not enough to really move towards the universality we're referring to. The enriching exchange between cultures allows us to experience interculturality, and to build universality in a more human way.

Interculturality<sup>9</sup> makes us experience universality more fully, because it incorporates cultural differences as the revelation of the face of humanity created in God's image, and it is enriched by the ever-greater exchanges among them. Interculturality isn't an end in itself, it's the means with which we can create the conditions to fully experience humanity, contributing to the humanization of individuals, cultures and peoples. This is more than just recognizing the existence of many cultures in the future and the past (multiculturalism). It comes from building bridges and fluid conversation among them. This is a complex process that can't be free from conflict, one that's not just a "meeting of cultures" to create a supra- meta- or transcultural space.<sup>10</sup> Rather, it is a "reciprocal exchange between cultures that might help transform and enrich all those involved."<sup>11</sup> Still, this is not about excluding or substituting enculturation; it is more about deepening it, because *no one can offer others what they do not have*.

Finally, interculturality is a participative and interactive process with the historical, social, economic and political culture in which it develops; as such, it makes the development of cultures more dynamic, promoting changes that allow for a growth in the understanding of the universality of humanity.

I should say that my reflections are not meant to impose a certain word or a concept; they are primarily to state the meaning of the different concepts analyzed. I do not aim to ask you to stop using the concepts *globalización* or *mundialización* or any of their derivatives; I just want to ensure that we can understand and always seek intercultural universality.

## **V. Challenges today to education that looks towards the future**

I acknowledge that the educational segment of the Society is working to get up-to-date.<sup>12</sup> That is what is expressed in the document that the Education Secretariat and the ICAJE have been working on to collect the challenges and opportunities that our current context offers our educational model. It

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<sup>9</sup> The characteristics of the phenomenon we refer to as *interculturality* and the relative novelty of reflecting on it mean that we should not formulate a regulatory concept that might do more to hide its reality than reveal it.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. STANISLAUS, L. – UEFFING, M. (eds.), *Interculturalidad*, Estella (Spain), Ed. Verbo Divino, 2017, p. 586.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> This can be seen in the final declarations of the Colloquium in Boston, or in the reflections from the SIPEI in Manresa.

encourages us to add the vision of the mission as it was formulated by General Congregation 36 to the process, to work together in the service of reconciliation and justice, which will only be possible in a world understood interculturally, as we've seen. I am convinced that education by the Society, especially in our schools, can profoundly renew itself in this direction.

Renewal is an ongoing task in educational work. We need to go a step ahead of what we know and imagine today. Our educational models need to prepare young people for the future. We cannot lie stuck in educational models in which we as adults do not feel comfortable, and therefore we need to take a step forward. We need to be alert to the danger of the institutional momentum that prevents discernment and needed renewal.

Within the context of a global trend like the one I just described, we need to ask ourselves: how can we better serve the mission of our schools? How can a school educate for reconciliation? How can we go to our frontiers like Pope Francis asked us to in his speech at the 36<sup>th</sup> General Congregation, to generate processes of transformation?<sup>13</sup> What frontiers should our schools reach, and what educational processes should take place?

We should answer with imagination and creativity, without forgetting that the goal of our education is to train individuals so they can give meaning to their lives and contribute to the common good within their context, their society and their planet. It is our job to create models.<sup>14</sup> We should not be afraid to do so. When we do, we're providing a service to the Church, which has asked Catholic education to renew its passion for this service to the world.<sup>15</sup> We should ask ourselves what Pope Francis asked the Society when celebrating the canonization of Peter Faber: *Do we have great visions and desires? Are we risking anything? Are we flying high? Does zeal for the Lord consume us (Psalm 69,10)? Or are we mediocre, contented with repeating apostolic programs that don't reach individuals or address their needs?*<sup>16</sup>

We should remember that the first Jesuits invested time and resources to create an educational model that may have been made up of eclectic components, but that was unified by the Ignatian vision of the world. We all know the great contributions of that model that the Society named the *Ratio Studiorum*. We're called to have the same creativity so we can respond to the challenges of the always-unsure future from our present context.

Although our schools, which some call "of brick and mortar", continue to be important, we need to have the freedom and the creativity to explore other models, even if they're hybrid. This includes online schools, or even cutting-edge educational models that embody the *magis* today. Fortunately, we are

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<sup>13</sup> Discourse by Holy Father Francis to the members of the 36<sup>th</sup> General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, October 24, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Nicolás, S.I., Adolfo. *Profundidad, Universalidad y Ministerio Intelectual. Retos para la Educación Superior Jesuita Hoy*. Mexico City, April 23, 2010

<sup>15</sup> Congress for Catholic Education, Rome, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Pope Francis, Homily, Iglesia del Gesù, Rome, January 3, 2014.

assisted in this challenge by the enormous creative potential of our companions in the educational apostolate, with whom we can work together to think, create and try out new possibilities.

Along these lines, I would like to mention some of the specific challenges we should take on as educators and as educational institutions of the Society of Jesus.

**First**, it is important for our institutions to be spaces for educational investigation, true laboratories in innovation in teaching, from which we can draw new teaching methods or models. This means that we'll explore what others do and what we can learn from them, as well as what educational science proposes for a world that's increasingly technical and shaped by the digital culture our students were born and raised in. Our institutions need to be aware of the anthropological and cultural change we're experiencing, and they need to know how to educate and train in a new way for a different future.

**Second**, without excluding any social class from our educational offering, we need to continue to make progress in educating for justice, with three elements in mind. First, the importance of reaching out to the poorest and most marginalized. Second, the need to train a critical and intelligent conscience when faced with unequal social processes, without participation, that are focused on consumption, the accumulation of wealth, and the exploitation of the environment. And third, a constructive attitude open to dialogue that can help us to find solutions. This should be reflected in our admission policies, our training programs, in the vision of science we transmit and in agreements with other schools and social institutions.

**Third**, respect and care for our "common home" demands that our institutions train our students in the environmental dimension of reconciliation. All human beings share responsibility for our planet, for its future viability, beyond our national, local or generational interests. It is important that we join in the efforts of many to create a sustainable society and economy, so that human beings and the environment are both protected. Our institutions should reflect this attitude in their actions and their physical structure.

**Fourth**, the development of a culture to protect minors and vulnerable individuals. Like the Church and society, the Society of Jesus participates in collective efforts to raise awareness and take the necessary measures to ensure that the children and young people families entrust us with have the protection they need. It should be evident that our institutions seek to protect minors and vulnerable individuals, preventing harm and acting immediately, effectively and transparently when needed. This is an essential commitment from the Society, and is vital to the credibility of our schools.

**Fifth**, the offering of religious training that opens students up to the transcendental dimension of life and that cultivates an experience of Christian faith that can transform personal and social life. Pope Francis told

participants in GC 36 that *true faith always involves a profound desire to change the world*. Our challenge is to know how to communicate Ignatian spirituality so that younger generations want to *love and serve in all things*, and so that they seek the greater glory of God, in addition to belonging to the Church. The challenge is knowing how to transmit what Fr. Nicolás calls the “Jesuit virus”, and what Pope Francis later defined as the Society’s own *virus*. In other words, the “mark” that we expect those that have passed through our educational institutions will have: that they live in tension between the earth and heaven. This means tension between *the faith they express in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit* with *what is going on today in the world*. According to the Pope, this tension *drives you to act, to change, to do, to imitate God the creator, redeemer, sanctifier; it drives you to be human*.<sup>17</sup>

**Sixth**, although the concept of the “global citizen” is still under construction, our education should be a creative actor in this. Our presence in so many places and cultures around the world allows us to create and offer educational proposals for an intercultural view of the world, in which all human beings and their peoples possess a “global citizenship”, where rights and duties are connected. This is beyond culture itself, nationalism or political or cultural fanaticism, which prevent the recognition of our radical brotherhood.

How can our schools welcome global citizens and offer them an education, one that respects the local particularities of cultures while making our potential and universal commitment evident? We should be able to put together educational programs that help us to think and act locally and globally, without dichotomies between the two dimensions, moving towards interculturality while understanding the cultural, social and religious diversity of our world as something enriching,<sup>18</sup> without losing our Christian and Ignatian identity.

## **VI. Collaboration and working as a network, paths to taking on universal challenges**

The challenges mentioned may be dizzying or even scary. Some are immense, especially when we see that our resources and capacities are so limited. Aware of this, General Congregation 35<sup>19</sup> and especially General Congregation 36<sup>20</sup> asked for greater discernment, and a more adequate use of our strength by

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<sup>17</sup> Pope Francis, to former Jesuit Students, at [http://es.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/11/11/%C2%AB%C2%BFtoday%C3%ADa\\_tienen\\_el\\_virus\\_jesu%C3%ADtico%C2%BB,\\_el\\_papa/1186082](http://es.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/11/11/%C2%AB%C2%BFtoday%C3%ADa_tienen_el_virus_jesu%C3%ADtico%C2%BB,_el_papa/1186082) (in Spanish).

<sup>18</sup> To respond to this rapidly-shrinking world, we have focused on educating for responsible citizens in the city of the world.” Kolvenbach, P., Georgetown University, June 7, 1989.

<sup>19</sup> General Congregation 35, d. 3,43.

<sup>20</sup> “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”. General Congregation 36, d. 2,3

working together as a network, making better use of our position as an international apostolic body.

I have referred to discernment elsewhere. I only want to indicate that our educational institutions also have, as a result of their Jesuit or Ignatian identity, the challenge of using it as a way of moving forwards and making decisions. I'd now like to focus more on *collaboration* and *working as a network*.

Collaboration with others is the only way, and it is a profoundly evangelical way whereby the Society of Jesus can carry out its mission today.<sup>21</sup> The magnitude and the interconnection of the problems affecting humanity are such that, today, we can only effectively work to solve them if the Church and the Society can work with others. With an attitude of collaboration, we can find people and organizations dedicated to serving others, seeking reconciliation of human kind and the defense of creation. With some, we will share our Christian faith, with others, we will share faith in God, and we will discover that others still are men and women of good will.

The collaboration between Jesuits and laypeople is a positive reality in our institutions. We have made plenty of progress in this area. Still, we need to continue to move forward, and for this we need all our creativity. The path taken so far shows us achievements as well as weaknesses to be addressed. How can we put together genuine teams with apostolic intent that can develop all their potential? How can we connect with our alumni so they feel like companions in the mission, not just nostalgia for the institution of their youth?

Collaboration spontaneously leads to cooperation through networks, and these are a creative way of organizing our apostolic work.<sup>22</sup> Operating as a network allows for collaboration between the apostolic task of the Society and other institutions, opening up new horizons for service that go beyond what is traditional in a certain region or province, and mobilizing greater resources and possibilities in favor of the mission.

To work as a network, we need to rekindle and consolidate our culture of generosity as a basis for an opening that can allow us to share a vision, cooperate with others and accept effective leadership that maintains the balance between local initiative and global authority.<sup>23</sup>

With different levels of development and success, our schools have taken on the need to create networks on a provincial, regional and global level. Some provincial and regional networks have helped enormously in our renewal process; today, it would be impossible to move forward without them. Although some provinces and regions have had difficulties, working as a network is now part of how we do things, as indicated at General Congregation

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. General Congregation 36 d.1, 35-38

<sup>22</sup> Cf. General Congregation 36, d.1, 35

<sup>23</sup> General Congregation 36, d. 2, 8

36. This means that our schools need to organize into local and regional networks, in addition to being open without reservation to the global network we need to complete. We should not be afraid to share programs, experiences, materials and even resources to put together our international network.

Only if we think and act in a joint, coordinated way, welcoming and incorporating the wealth of our local diversity, will we be able to use the network to take on global challenges that affect our local conditions. We have over 2000 schools, and a notable educational presence in over 60 countries. We have enormous capacity to awaken hope in our world, contributing to the formation of men and women who are just, true global citizens, capable of generating dialogue and reconciliation among peoples and with creation.

Over the past few days, at this Congress, you have all experienced the diversity, the wealth and the immense potential that comes from working together. The Society truly expects everyone's commitment, especially from the educational delegates in each Province and from the different regional networks, to move forward in building and consolidating a global network of schools with a common agenda working towards reconciliation and justice, built by the Lord, to achieve peace. This means that all networks should include the point of view of the international network in their strategic and structural plans, and that they should all feel responsible for it. Working for local and regional networks will also mean working in and for the global network.

As educational delegates in your provinces, you are partly responsible for the proper operation of the networks, on every level. Two specific initiatives, of the many that we could explore together, are their contribution to the development of the global *Educate Magis* platform, and work in favor of a *global citizenship* that cares for the planet and embodies solidarity. These objectives can give full meaning to the theme of this Congress: "united in a global network: a fire that kindles other fires."

Still, I should state that the network we're called to form is not just to connect us to other schools. We need to be aware that schools are apostolic platforms in dialogue and collaboration with the Society's other apostolic institutions: universities, social projects, spirituality centers, parishes and other apostolic presences. That way, we will all grow and be able to provide greater and better apostolic service.

I will finish by saying that the 36<sup>th</sup> General Congregation also asked us to practice *apostolic planning*, in order to effectively respond to the challenges we face. This is nothing more than the instrument that allows an institution to implement decisions made through discernment in an organized fashion. Planning offers us a strategic way of organizing time, actions and responsibilities for putting into effect decisions. This means that we work as a single body, with a single purpose, as part of a team with many different tasks and roles.

In our case, just planning for an educational institution is not enough. For it to be apostolic, it should make present the Good News in each institution, to every human being involved in it and benefiting from its service. Planning must also be “apostolic” because it is driven by the Ignatian *magis*, avoiding doing things in a mediocre manner and looking for the best and greatest service. We will not allow the tension between spiritual discernment through the examen and apostolic planning to disappear. We also will not let it turn into an administrative tool, an end in itself, that hides the purpose and meaning of what we’re called to do.

***Conclusion: a global, intercultural network with the mission of reconciliation.***

To conclude, I would like to remember what Pedro Ribadeneira wrote to King Philip II of Spain in the name of Saint Ignatius in 1556: *all good in Christendom and throughout the world depends on the proper education of youth.*<sup>24</sup> I believe that these words are still valid for the Society of Jesus and the Church.

Not in vain, Pope Francis has called for a Synod on *youth and vocational discernment*, looking to contribute to building a rejuvenated Church capable of giving hope to young people. This Synod will be a good opportunity to feel that we’re part of the Church, to listen to our students, to better understand their world, to welcome their dreams and concerns, to learn from them. It will also be a chance to show them that they are part of the Church, and the Church needs them.

Our schools are a magnificent platform for listening to and serving today’s youth, helping them dream of a new world that is fairer, more peaceful and in harmony with creation, one they have to build themselves.

By renewing our trust in God, we want to move forward as a global network with a universal mission. The challenges before us are many, but the apostolic possibilities can be greater. We need to detect them. God continues to work to create and save. The *missio Dei* continues. This faith encourages us to take on the path of apostolic audaciousness that makes the impossible possible.

Thank you very much!

Arturo Sosa, S.I.

*(Original: Spanish)*

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<sup>24</sup> Monumenta Pedagógica 1, p. 475 (original in Spanish)