

## General Congregations 32 and 34

EXCERPTED BY JOSEPH DAOUST

### **GC 34 Decree 2: Servants of Christ's Mission**

24 3. We exercise our Jesuit mission within the total evangelising mission of the Church. This mission is 'a single but complex reality which develops in a variety of ways': through the integral dimensions of--witness of life, proclamation, conversion, inculturation, the genesis of local churches, dialogue and the promotion of the justice willed by God. . . .

### **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." The aim of our mission received from Christ, as presented in the Formula of the Institute, is the service of faith. 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," 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 and directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about 'a new creation.'"

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### **GC 34 Decree 3: Our Mission and Justice**

53 4. For the vision of justice which guides us is intimately linked with our faith. It is deeply rooted in the Scriptures, Church tradition, and our Ignatian heritage. It transcends notions of justice derived from ideology, philosophy, or particular political movements, which can never be an adequate expression of the justice of the Kingdom for which we are called to struggle at the side of our Companion and King. . . .

68 19. In each of our different apostolates, we must create communities of solidarity in seeking justice. Working together with our colleagues, every Jesuit ministry can and should promote justice in one or more of the following ways: (a) direct service and accompaniment of the poor; (b) developing awareness of the demands of justice joined to the social responsibility to achieve it; (c) participating in social mobilization for the creation of a more just social order. . . .

70 21. Jesuit institutions can use the following means to help in implementing our mission: institutional evaluation of the role they play in society; examination of whether the institution's own internal structures and policies reflect our mission; collaboration and exchange with similar institutions in diverse social and cultural contexts; continuing formation of personnel regarding mission.



#### **GC 34 Decree 4: Our Mission and Culture**

85 7. [Our integrated mission] is not just a pragmatic apostolic strategy; it is rooted in the mysticism flowing from the experience of Ignatius, which directs us simultaneously towards the mystery of God and the activity of God in creation. Both in our personal lives of faith and in our ministries, it is never a question of choosing either God or the world: it is always God in the world, laboring to bring it to perfection so that the world comes, finally, to be fully in God....

87 9. In the exercise of our mission, we bring a simple criterion from our Ignatian tradition: in our personal lives of faith, we learn that we are in consolation when we are fully in touch with what God is doing in our hearts, and we are in desolation when our lives are in conflict with his action. So, too, our ministry of evangelizing culture will be a ministry of consolation when it is guided by ways that bring to light the character of God's activity in those cultures, and which strengthen our sense of the divine mystery. But our efforts will be misguided, and even destructive, when our activity runs contrary to the grain of his presence in the cultures which the Church addresses, or when we claim to exercise sole proprietorial rights over the affairs of God.

100 17. One way of serving God's mystery of salvation is through dialogue, a spiritual conversation of equal partners, that opens human beings to the core of their identity. In such a dialogue, we come into contact with the activity of God in the lives of other men and women, and deepen our sense of this divine action: "By dialogue, we let God be present in our midst; for as we open ourselves in dialogue to one another, we also open ourselves to God." We try to enable people to become aware of God's presence in their culture and to help them evangelize others in their turn. The ministry of dialogue is conducted with a sense that God's action is antecedent to ours. We do not plant the seed of his presence for he has already done that in the culture; he is already bringing it to fruitfulness, embracing all the diversity of creation, and our role is to cooperate with this divine activity.

101 18. The work of God in the diversity of human history is seen in the long process of enlightened human growth--still incomplete!--as expressed in religious, social, moral and



cultural forms which bear the mark of the silent work of the Spirit. In the conceptions of the mind, in the habits of the heart, in the root-metaphors and values of all cultures--even, we might say, in the very process by which our physical bodies become capable of intense spiritual experience--God is preparing the conditions in his creatures for the loving acknowledgement of his truth, making them ready for the transformation promised in Christ. "All are called to a common destiny, the fullness of life in God."

### **Our Mission and Critical Post-Modern Culture**

102 19. This is true even of those cultures where there is a difficult dialogue with men and women who think they have gone beyond Christianity or any religious commitment. We need to pay particular attention to them because of their influence throughout the world. Some contemporary cultures are inclined so to restrict religious faith to the realm of the private and the personal, even regarding it as a strange eccentricity, that it is difficult for the Gospel to "animate, direct and unify" contemporary secular culture. We recognize that many of our contemporaries judge that neither Christian faith, nor any religious belief is good for humanity.

103 20. The problems of working in these contexts need no elaboration here, because the boundary line between the Gospel and the modern and post--modern culture passes through the heart of each of us. Each Jesuit encounters the impulse to unbelief first of all in himself; it is only when we deal with that dimension in ourselves that we can speak to others of the reality of God. In addition, we cannot speak to others if the religious language we use is completely foreign to them: the theology we use in our ministry cannot ignore the vista of modern critical questions within which we too live. Only when we make sense of our own experience and understanding of God, can we say things which make sense to contemporary agnosticism.

104 21. This is a ministry which should not ignore the Christian mystical tradition that repeatedly treats of the wordless and imageless experience of God which surpasses human concepts: *Si comprehendis, non est Deus*, said Augustine. The experience of a silence



surrounding the nature of God may be the starting point for many of our contemporaries, but it is also found within the depths of Christian experience and faith. There is a fragmentation of Christian faith in God in post-modern culture, in which human spirituality becomes detached from an explicitly religious expression. People's spiritual lives have not died; they are simply taking place outside the Church. "Post-Christian" culture witnesses, strangely and implicitly, to a reverence for the God who cannot be imaged by human beings without destroying the divine mystery: this is related to what Christians mean by "the Father." It also tries to find meaning within the very structure of human, embodied experience: this is related to the Christian belief that the "meaning" of the world (the "Logos") is made known to us in the humanity of Jesus. And there is a deep desire, expressed through a concern for the environment, to revere the natural order as a place where there is an immanent, but transcendent, presence: this connects with what Christians call the "Spirit." . . .

106 23. A genuine attempt to work from within the shared experience of Christians and unbelievers in a secular and critical culture, built upon respect and friendship, is the only successful starting point. Our ministry towards atheists and agnostics will either be a meeting of equal partners in dialogue, addressing common questions, or it will be hollow. This dialogue will be based upon a sharing of life, a shared commitment to action for human development and liberation, a sharing of values and a sharing of human experience. Through dialogue, modern and post-modern cultures may be challenged to become more open to approaches and experiences which, though rooted in human history, are new to them. At the same time theology, when developed with an eye to contemporary critical culture, may help people discover the limits of immanence and the human necessity of transcendence.

107 24. We need to recognize that the Gospel of Christ will always provoke resistance; it challenges men and women and requires of them a conversion of mind, heart and behavior. It is not difficult to see that a modernist, scientific-technological culture, too often one-sidedly rationalistic and secular in tone, can be destructive of human and spiritual values. As



Ignatius makes clear in the Meditation on Two Standards, the call of Christ is always radically opposed to values which refuse spiritual transcendence and promote a pattern of selfish life. Sin is social in its expression, as is the counter-witness offered by grace: unless a Christian life distinctly differs from the values of secular modernity, it will have nothing special to offer. One of the most important contributions we can make to critical contemporary culture is to show that the structural injustice in the world is rooted in value-systems promoted by a powerful modern culture which is becoming global in its impact.

### **Change and Hope**

108 25. It is part of our Jesuit tradition to be involved in the transformation of every human culture, as human beings begin to reshape their patterns of social relations, their cultural inheritance, their intellectual projects, their critical perspectives on religion, truth and morality, their whole scientific and technological understanding of themselves and the world in which they live. We commit ourselves to accompany people, in different contexts, as they and their culture make difficult transitions. We commit ourselves to develop the dimension of an inculturated evangelization within our mission of the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

109 26. "Ignatius loved the great cities;" they were where this transformation of the human community was taking place, and he wanted Jesuits to be involved in the process. The "city" can be for us the symbol of our current efforts to bring fulfillment to human culture. That the project, in its present form, is seriously flawed, no one doubts; that we are more skeptical now than we were even thirty years ago is true; that there have been massive dislocations and inequalities is clear to all; that the totalitarian experiments of this century have been brutal and almost demonic in intensity, none will dispute; that it seems sometimes to resemble the Babel and Babylon of the Bible is all too evident. But our aim is the confused but inescapable attempt to cooperate in the creation of that community which, according to the Book of Revelation, God will bring about--and God will bring it about--in the form of the holy city, the radiant New Jerusalem: "By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth



shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day--and there shall be no night there. They shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations" (Rev 21: 24-26). Until that day arrives, our vocation is to work generously with the Risen Christ in the all-too-human city where there is poverty of body and spirit, domination and control, manipulation of mind and heart; and to serve the Lord there until he returns to bring to perfection the world in which he died.

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### **GC 34 Decree 17: Jesuits and University Life**

#### **A Challenge from the Structure of Universities**

407 4. During the past thirty years, Jesuit higher education has undergone a very rapid development in size, complexity, and the evolution of more participative governance structures. During this same period, the number of Jesuits engaged in a university, or at least their proportion to the whole acuity, has diminished: lay and other religious colleagues join with us in a common enterprise. In some places, Jesuits no longer "own" their universities in any real sense. In others, government regulations create a situation in which we no longer fully "control" them. In various places, some ecclesiastical superiors may be distrustful of the freedom necessary for a university truly to function in accord with its specific proper aims.

408 5. In response to this challenge, Jesuits must continue to work hard, with imagination and faith, and often under very difficult circumstances, to maintain and even to strengthen the specific character of each of their institutions as both Jesuit and as a university.

409 6. The noun guarantees a commitment to that fundamental autonomy, integrity and honesty of a university, precisely as a university: as a place of serene and open search for and discussion of the truth. At the same time, it points to the missions proper to every university--its dedication to research, teaching and the various forms of service that correspond to its cultural mission--as an indispensable horizon and context for the genuine preservation,



renewal and communication of knowledge and human values. We Jesuits seek knowledge for its own sake and yet must regularly ask "knowledge for what?"

### **A Challenge of Faith and Justice to our Universities**

410 7. We must affirm the adjective, Jesuit, no less strongly. This will mean the authentic participation of any university calling itself Jesuit, or any university which operates ultimately under our responsibility, in our basic Jesuit identity and mission. While we want to avoid any instrumentalizing of the university or any reduction of its mission to only one legitimate goal, the adjective Jesuit nevertheless requires that the university be in harmony with the demands of the service of faith and promotion of justice found in Decree 4 of GC 32. The Jesuit university can and must discover in its own proper institutional forms and authentic purposes a specific and appropriate arena for the encounter with the faith which does justice.

411 8. We applaud the many ways in which Jesuit universities have tried to apply this decree: both in the lives of students through outreach programs of mutual contact and service with the poor, and in the central teaching, research and publication aims of the university. If it remains true that, in some ways, most Jesuit universities must strive to do even more in order to embody this mission of service to the faith and its concomitant promotion of justice, this only reflects the challenge we all face as Jesuits to find concrete and effective ways in which large and complex institutions can be guided by and to that justice which God himself so insistently longs for and enables. The task is possible; it has produced martyrs who have testified "that an institution of higher learning and investigation can become an instrument of justice in the name of the Gospel."

412 9. The complexity of a Jesuit university can call for new structures of government and control on the part of the Society which will make it possible to preserve its identity and at the same time enable it to relate effectively to the academic world and society of which it is part, including the Society of Jesus and the Church. More specifically, in order for an institution to call itself a Jesuit institution, periodic evaluation and accountability to the Society are necessary, in order to judge whether or not its dynamics are being developed in





line with the Jesuit mission. The Jesuits who work in these universities, both as a community and as individuals, must actively commit themselves to the institution, assisting in its orientation, so that it can achieve the objectives desired for it by the Society.

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## **GC 34 Decree 13: Cooperation with Laity in Mission**

### **Formation of laity and Jesuits**

338 8. Putting ourselves at the service of the apostolate of the laity challenges us. We need to respond to their desire for formation so that they are able to minister as fully as possible according to their call and gifts. This formation should draw on the abundant resources and experiences of the Society. We should not hesitate to offer, when requested, the experience of the Spiritual Exercises and our spiritual direction. We can encourage them toward the apostolic priority of the service of faith and the promotion of justice with a preferential love of the poor. By responding in this way we offer who we are. As persons whose lives are centered on loving and serving God in all things, we should help others recognize and discern the apostolic possibilities of their lives and work. Laity who collaborate in Jesuit apostolates can expect from us a specific formation in Ignatian values, help in discernment of apostolic priorities and objectives, and practical strategies for their realization.

353 19. . . . we need increasingly to shift the focus of our attention from the exercise of our own direct ministry to the strengthening of laity in their mission. To do so will require of us an ability to draw out the gifts of lay persons and to animate and inspire them.

### **Collaboration in works of the Society**

341 11. We collaborate with the laity in works of the Society. A work of the Society substantially contributes to realizing the mission of the Society, manifests Ignatian values, and bears the name "Jesuit" with the Society's approval. The Society takes "ultimate



responsibility" for this work. Examples are Jesuit educational institutions, parishes, social centers, retreat houses, and the Jesuit Refugee Service.

342 12. Each such work must be guided by a clear mission statement which outlines the purposes of the work and is the basis for collaboration in it. This mission statement should be presented and clearly explained to those with whom we collaborate. Programs are to be provided and supported (even financially) to enable lay people to acquire a greater knowledge of the Ignatian tradition and spirituality and to grow in each one's personal vocation.

343 13. All those engaged in the work should exercise co-responsibility and be engaged in discernment and participative decision-making where it is appropriate. Lay persons must have access to and be trained for positions of responsibility, according to their qualifications and commitment. A lay person can be the Director of a Jesuit work. When this is the case, Jesuits receive their mission to work in the institution from the Provincial, and they carry out this mission under the direction of the lay Director. In institutions where Jesuits are a small minority, special attention should be given both to the leadership role of lay colleagues and to appropriate means for the Society to assure the Jesuit identity of the work. . . .

### **Lay leadership in works of the Society**

354 20. The emerging "Church of the Laity" will also have an impact on our own Jesuit apostolic works. This transformation can enrich these works and expand their Ignatian character, if we know how to cooperate with the grace of the emergence of the laity. When we speak of "our apostolates", we will mean something different by "our". It will signify a genuine Ignatian partnership of laity and Jesuits, each of us acting according to our proper vocation. Lay persons will rightly take on a greater role of responsibility and leadership within these works. Jesuits will be called on to support them in their initiative by Ignatian formation, inculcation of Jesuit apostolic values, and the witness of our priestly and religious lives. If our service will be humbler, it will also be more challenging and creative, and more



in accord with the graces we have received. This actualization of the vocation of the laity can show more clearly the grace of our vocation.

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*Excerpted for presentation by Joseph Daoust, S.J., AJCU Presidents' Meeting, February 4, 1997*

