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Jesuits in Dialogue: the interreligious dimension is a newsletter published by the new Secretariat for Interreligious Dialogue (JSID). The secretary, Father Thomas Michel, sees the newsletter "primarily as a channel for exchanging information among Jesuits and offering a forum for the sharing of views" on all matters related to the interreligious dimension of our Jesuit mission. If you would like a copy of issue 1, please fax the JSID at +39-6-687.5101, or send an e-mail to interrel@sjcuria.org, or write to JSID at the address on the cover of *PJ*, indicating the language (English, French, Italian or Spanish) you prefer.

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Michael Czerny, S.J.
Editor

"Toward the Justice of the Gospel in Society and Culture"

Michael Czerny, S.J. and Fernando Ponce, S.J.¹

"The Lord laid his hand upon us and he brought us out by the spirit of the Lord" (Ezekiel 37:1) and set us down at the *Centro di Spiritualità S. Ignazio* in Cappella Cangiani, Naples, for the first International Congress of the Social Apostolate of the Society of Jesus.²

In order to provide the context of the three main addresses of the Congress – those of Cardinal Michael Giordano, Archbishop of Naples, of Father Vittorio Liberti, Provincial of Italy, and of Father General, which are published in this issue of *Promotio Iustitiae* – we will describe here the structure and original idea of the Congress, areas of agreement which emerged in the discussion, and some of the more significant results.

THE SKELETON

¹ Fernando Ponce, S.J., coordinator of the Social Apostolate in the Province of Ecuador, is studying Political Science in Paris. He was delegate of his Province to the Naples Congress.

² The Congress was planned and organized by Michael Czerny, S.J., Secretary for Social Justice, and Giacomo Costa, S.J., a scholastic of the Italian Province who is doing regency at the Secretariat (SJS), with Liliana Carvajal (secretary) and, in Naples, with the great help of Marcelo Gidi, S.J. (Chile), Klaus Vähröder, S.J. (Germany) and Marco Zarantonello, S.J. (Italy).

The six days of meetings, from Monday, June 16th, to Saturday, June 21st, were divided basically into two parts with an important transition between them.

From Monday to Thursday we worked in fifteen subgroups, each on a different theme, all aspects of the social apostolate. On Friday and Saturday we met by Assistancy in order to draw out the results of particular relevance for our home Provinces and to discuss the priorities and changes that should be promoted. By way of transition between the two main parts of the Congress, on the afternoon of Thursday, June 19th, we had the opportunity of visiting a number of social works conducted by the Italian Jesuits, and on the morning of Friday, June 20th, the plenary was dedicated to hearing the reports of the fifteen groups and the address of Father General.

Monday 16th	Tuesday 17th	Wednesday 18th	Thursday 19th	Friday 20th	Saturday 21st
Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Eucharist (Europe)	Prayer	Prayer
Introduction: Fr. Liberti Opening: Cardinal Giordano	Plenary: Economic, cultural, religious context	Plenary: Sources of our vision and spirituality	Plenary: Ways and means Working groups	Plenary: Dialogue with Father General	Assistancy groups Plenary
Working groups	Working groups	Working groups	The four excursions ³	Assistancy groups	Concluding plenary
Eucharist (South Asia)	Eucharist (Africa)	Eucharist (East Asia)		Eucharist (Latin America)	Eucharist (North America)

Throughout the first half of the Congress we worked in two ways: the mornings were taken up with plenary sessions and the afternoons with meetings of the working groups. Each plenary session focused on a certain number of the themes discussed in the afternoons. Thus:

Plenary Session: The economic, cultural and religious context

Working groups:

1. The economic context
2. The cultural context
3. The religious context
4. Socio-cultural analysis

Plenary Session: Sources of our vision and our spirituality

Working groups:

5. Jesuit community
6. Discernment
7. Insertion
8. Sources of our spirituality

³ The old city centre, the Gesù Nuovo Church and Residence, the struggle against usury. The Emmanuel Community for the rehabilitation of drug addicts in Casoria. The Santa Maria della Speranza Parish in Scampia, a run-down area on the outskirts of Naples. The Astalli Centre for migrants and refugees in Casandrino.

9. Faith and justice in the Church
10. Tensions in the social apostolate

Plenary Session:	<u>The manner and means of our social apostolate</u>
Working groups:	11. Collaboration
	12. Our model of society and communities of solidarity
	13. Evaluation and planning
	14. Structures of the Society of Jesus
	15. The present state of the social apostolate

We delegates were divided among the fifteen groups according to language and, as far as possible, with care to include a representative of each Assistency in each group.

There were 160 participants in the Congress. In addition to one delegate for each Province or Region (or, more precisely, for each major superior), there were also in attendance, for at least part of the Congress, members of the General Curia such as the ten Regional Assistants,⁴ the general counsellor for formation and promotion of vocations (José Morales), and the secretaries for education (Gabriel Codina), social communication (Gaston Roberge), interreligious dialogue (Thomas Michel), press and information (José de Vera), Ignatian spirituality (Joseph Tetlow), refugees (Mark Raper) and, in the role of host, the social apostolate (Michael Czerny and Giacomo Costa). Father General attended all four plenary sessions from June 17th to the 20th.

We delegates came from many different cultural milieux and represented a wide variety of apostolic strategies: centres for research and social analysis, centres for direct action and for training, popular education, service to refugees, formation and community development. We missed the presence of delegates from Alaska, Cuba, Lithuania, Northern Africa, Quebec and Vietnam. Young Jesuits (defining "young" objectively as "prior to final vows") made up nearly a third of the participants.

As participants we enjoyed many opportunities for dialogue at different levels and at various moments of the day. Clearly there was ample interchange in the working groups and the plenary sessions, but there were also informal meetings during the breaks and at meals as well as in special "ad hoc" gatherings. For example, there was a lunchtime gathering of the young Jesuits. The delegates from India and Sri Lanka organized an evening meeting with the Latin Americans and another with the Africans, in order to get to know one another and to discuss common topics. A French delegate issued an open invitation to discuss the difficulties in initially attracting Jesuits to take up the social apostolate.

Thus great diversity was a prominent characteristic of the Congress: a variety of cultural and apostolic horizons, the number of different themes touched upon and the sub-themes bearing in different ways on the Society's social apostolate. And, of course, the many languages. A team of Jesuit translators performed yeoman service in coping with English, French, Italian and Spanish, the four official languages. It was not so bad, one of the translators admitted, because while they expected to land at the tower of Babel, in the end they found it was really a matter of Pentecost.

⁴ The Central European Assistant, due to an unforeseen and unavoidable engagement, was unable to attend the Congress.

For the delegates the Congress was a time of listening, of reflection, of prayer. But all in all we did no more than continue an undertaking of impressive proportions that had been going on long before we arrived in Naples ...

THE NERVES

... because the Congress was not born from dry bones, but emerged out of the reflections at meetings that had been held in each Assistancy during the months preceding the Congress, the careful planning and hard work of the preparatory committee or *coetus*, the support of Father General and the persevering dedication of the Social Justice Secretariat (SJS).

The purpose of the Congress was to contribute to the renewal of the social apostolate as a vital sector of the Society's mission. Our immediate goal was not to produce a document but to promote reflection and interchange as we considered the various dimensions of this renewal. Accordingly, the delegates were not saddled with the task of producing papers. Our job was to ponder and to dialogue in the working groups and plenary sessions.

As an organizational strategy, a writing group of six Jesuits was constituted with the task of gathering whatever ideas surfaced or were written down during the six days, with a view to later producing a working document and a video. The organizers hoped in this way to free the delegates from the pressure of producing at all cost a final document by the end of an intense week, and instead to encourage reflection and exchange. The strategy certainly worked.

The whole process began in 1995, after the 34th General Congregation, with a proposal entitled "**Social Apostolate Initiative, 1995-2005**," which raised the apparently simple question:

"How do you Jesuits in the social apostolate bring the Good News to society? How do you describe your social vision and how do you carry on your work?"^a

Along with this main question were two others which could be formulated and approached independently of the first:

"How do you Jesuits analyze and interpret society in all its relevant aspects (for example, the economic, political, cultural, media and religious)?"

"How do you evaluate your various projects of social involvement, research, direct action or development?"

These questions were thrashed out in the various Assistancies from July, 1995, until April, 1997. They were the subject of talks, meetings and workshops held in the following places:

1995: Rio de Janeiro (July), Dublin (August), Harare (September), New Delhi (September), Manresa (October), Madrid (November), Washington (November), Manila (December).

^a "What do you think is happening in society? How do you respond? What's evangelical, Jesuit, priestly about your response? Why do you do such work? What do you hope to achieve? How do you evaluate your efforts and institutions: what counts for success, for failure?" *Promotio Iustitiae* 64 (June 1996).

1996: Montreal (January), Prague (January), Birmingham (February), Caracas (February), Nairobi (March), Madrid (March), Brussels (May), Palermo (May), Milwaukee (May), Malta (May), Strasbourg (May), Belo Horizonte (May), Ottawa (June), Tokyo (July), Guatemala (July), Lima (August), Ludwigshafen (September), Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania (September), Czestochowa (October), Florence (November), Madrid (November), Santo Domingo (December), Kinshasa (December).

1997: Munich (January), Bangalore (February), Rome (March), New Delhi (April).

These meetings got us started in the work of self-evaluation and reflection on our manner of dealing with problems that are at once economic, political, cultural and religious. At this stage, a draft response to the questions was produced in each Assistancy. Taking all these preliminary results into account, the preparatory *coetus* (March, 1997) put the topics in focus and decided on the dynamics of the Congress ...⁶

THE FLESH

... *"Toward the Justice of the Gospel in Society and Culture."* The mere statement of the Congress theme leaves it clear why a brief report can hardly sum up adequately the rich content of the discussions and exchanges, nor fully convey the spirit that animated them. Our intention here is to highlight some areas of agreement and some especially vital signs of the Congress:

1) The option for the poor. The central value of this option for the social apostolate was unanimously appreciated and serenely affirmed. It is also clear that, although there are many kinds of "poor" depending on different contexts, everyone had the sense that we still have much to learn from them: the value they place on feelings, and on immediate bodily reality, or their sense of hope. Some of the delegates were concerned about the possible banalization of "the concept of the poor," but it was not clear just what this possibility would entail. At any rate, one delegate aptly observed that the key measure to take of a culture is the way that society treats its poor, and this statement met with general approval.

2) Insertion. The point was made that the social apostolate requires a certain degree of insertion among those with whom we want to work and whom we want to serve. Particular emphasis was laid on the need for insertion into the world of the poor. In this case we should give preference to apostolic effectiveness over purely professional efficiency. (A trite but clear example: taking the bus instead of going by car may be apostolically "effective" on account of the witness given, even though it is also a less "efficient" procedure in terms of the use of time.)

3) The special colouring which contact with the poor lends to Ignatian spirituality. As the delegate from Santo Domingo appropriately put it, if closeness to the poor is at the origins of our spirituality, then what will develop is the best in us: on the one hand, tenderness and compassion, on the other, passionate dissatisfaction. This closeness is valid only in the light of faith, and it obliges us to choose between an attitude of openness in weakness or one of defensive narrow-mindedness. A delegate from India showed how the meditation on the Two Standards could be helpful in forming our social sensitivity.

⁶ *Promotio Iustitiae* 67 (May 1997).

4) Teamwork. The great pioneers of the social apostolate are the giants on whose shoulders we of the new generation stand, to use the words of an Irish delegate. However nowadays this apostolate is considered not in individual terms, but as carried out in teams made up of Jesuits, lay Christians and others of good will. Thus there is evident need to establish networks of collaboration with organizations already in the field which are pursuing goals compatible with ours.

5) The formation of new generations of Jesuits, and their incorporation in the apostolate. Our formation programmes must include experiences and courses designed to help Jesuits in formation become aware of the urgent social needs of the day and also, some said, as a way to interest them in the social apostolate. The delegate from the South German Province mentioned an interesting proposal in this regard: the establishment of an "Ellacuría Month" of insertion and socio-cultural analysis for Jesuits in formation.

6) The essential role of our community of faith in the social apostolate. Facing the danger of individualism that permeates the Society and the mistrust in grand revolutions to change the world, the new generations of Jesuits require a community ambience which will afford them dialogue and mutual support. What is still more important, they have to be able to articulate their commitment to justice explicitly springing from faith. When hope is in short supply, the community of faith can and should provide for it.

7) The future of the social sector. If current trends in the Society continue, the number of qualified Jesuits really carrying this apostolate will be reduced even further, unless Jesuits in the social sector, superiors, *formatores* as well as those in formation, react and take initiative.

THE SKIN

The Social Justice Secretariat had prepared us two volumes of preliminary working papers drafted in the Assistancies: *Assistancy Drafts toward "Characteristics"* and *Assistancy Drafts toward "Socio-cultural Analysis."* We also received the *Catalogue* of the Jesuit social apostolate in four volumes: Africa-Asia, America, Europe and Social Centres.

These materials formed the basis of many of our discussions, especially in the form of the principal themes — context, sources, our manner and means — and the fifteen sub-themes. When we speak of "our characteristics" in the broad sense as including socio-cultural analysis and an approach to evaluation, this is what we could call "characteristics" as **product**. It will be published as an authoritative draft document, in booklet and video form, in early 1998.

We are now entering a new and even more significant phase, a phase that seeks to be as broadly participative as possible with the goal of obtaining a deep and wide-ranging consensus. Here we are talking about "characteristics" as a **process**. Between 1997 and mid-1999, our Provinces, Jesuits engaged in the social apostolate and our co-workers, and Jesuits and co-workers in other apostolic sectors, will be invited to reflect on the characteristics of the social apostolate.

Until the end of 1997 we can use the materials already at hand: the three main addresses of the Congress, published in this issue of *Promotio Iustitiae*; the *Assistancy Drafts* as well as the *Catalogue* distributed to all the participants. In using these, one should keep in mind that they are neither final nor official Congress documents, but they do get across the tone of the proceeding and serve as a starting point for reflection. In early 1998 the booklet and the video will be distributed.

During this process of reflection called for by the **Initiative 1995-2005**, there are four objectives to be aimed at:

- i) The dedication and interest of both Jesuits and their co-workers in discussing the present state of their social works. What is at stake here is the continuity or "sustainability" of the social apostolate in the future.
- ii) The capacity these works show for renewal and development.
- iii) The corporate commitment of each Province, to respond as a body to the new challenges which the Gospel encounters in contemporary society.
- iv) The interest, the dreams, the integration and the commitment of each new generation of Jesuits.

The questions for discussion can be stated quite simply. For example: What has to be done or changed in the social apostolate in order to ensure the attainment of these four goals? What are the important changes one would want to propose and initiate at the local level? – what changes in organization and structure at the Province level, and in our way of coordinating this apostolate? – in our relations with other apostolic sectors? – with formation? – and with the promotion of vocations?

From now until mid-1999, feedback is needed. Every time there is some significant discussion regarding "characteristics," we urgently ask that a report of the principal results, including critical comments, be sent to the Social Justice Secretariat. In this way, when the time comes to prepare the definitive version of 1999, our characteristics will have been well tested in the field.

This process has been launched in a somewhat unprecedented way. We want to hear at length what Jesuits at the grass roots have to say about the social ministry which the body of the Society conducts. It will be a long and perhaps tedious process (after all, it is called "1995-2005"), with meetings and workshops, videos and papers up to our ears, a process that will evoke a whole range of reactions from optimist to pessimistic. It will require the participation of Jesuits and non-Jesuit co-workers, of intellectuals and direct activists, people from all the apostolic sectors. But it is worth the effort to keep it going.

THE SPIRIT

What has the Naples Congress accomplished on behalf of the social apostolate? The most important result seems to be everything that the social apostolate has learned about its own **characteristics**. We have learned first of all that our apostolic sector is not characterized only by a series of authoritative precepts on "what we should do." Such prescriptions exist, to be sure, but more to the point, our sector is also characterized by deeply-held and unanimously shared convictions, by key questions which arise time and again, by tensions running through all our works and Provinces, by our typical ways of looking at problems. For this reason the "characteristics of the social apostolate" cannot simply be a final document telling us what to do, but a process of exploration and listening.

In the words of the delegate of the Provincial of Spain: "As the reporters from the fifteen working groups were delivering a summary of their more or less accomplished work, one noticed a feeling of consensus around certain profound tendencies which no one attempted to synthesize but which I would express as follows: the centrality of the poor and of insertion amongst them; the need to confront economic and cultural globalization from a basis of alternative actions, both locally and in network; the fundamental spiritual experience of the God of Jesus in the suffering of victims; the

urgent need to realize our potential in social sectors, but always keeping in view the whole of the Society of Jesus.... When Father General spoke eloquently towards the end of the morning, he did not enter into concrete problems that surfaced during the Congress, but remained at the level of principles, beginning with the history of the apostolate and the vital spiritual challenges rising from the faith-justice option. His evocative and warmhearted address was for many a solemn confirmation of the option clearly taken by the Society in the recent General Congregation and a strong support for those deep trends which were rising out of the rich personal and communal experience of the participants.⁷

Another far-reaching result of the Congress is the fact that we have learned how important **complexity** is. Social reality itself is complex, and our social apostolate cannot ignore this complexity in its discussions and projects without betraying the reality into which the Lord Jesus sends us to live and serve. One way of making sure we pay due attention to the complexity of reality in our projects and reflections is to give **listening and dialogue** the importance they deserve, at this stage of the Initiative:

- To listen and to dialogue among ourselves, Jesuits in the social apostolate, in order to reach a new mutual awareness and support between works "of the head" and works "of the feet."

- To hear what Jesuits in other apostolic sectors in the Province have to say to us and to dialogue with them.

- To listen to the Provincial who bears responsibility for the vitality of the social sector and for the apostolic thrust and priorities of the whole Province, and to remain in dialogue with him.

- To listen and to dialogue at the Assistancy level as well.

- To listen carefully to what our co-workers, both lay and religious, have to say to us and to include them in our dialogue.

- To listen and to dialogue especially with young Jesuits.

- Above all to listen to the poor and to seek at all costs a dialogue with them.

- Finally, to listen – and to listen a great deal – to what God wants to say to us and to dialogue with the Lord in our prayer.

Another lesson learned concerns the **tensions** which are always with us, not to be overcome and much less to be eliminated, in order to learn to live with them in an equilibrium that is the fruit of spiritual discernment. Among such tensions, the theme of "globalization" was unavoidable when it came time to analyze the various contexts of our apostolates, but it proved impossible to reach agreement on just what it means. For some, it is a question of the globalization driven by neo-liberalism which widens the gap between rich and poor. For others, it is rather a cultural globalization which destroys local cultures. For still others, globalization is an ambiguous phenomenon, and neo-liberalism also has its positive aspects which need to be humanized. For this reason there were no unanimously supported strategies. Certain delegates, for example some from India, urged that the Society take a clear position condemning the system. Others pointed to the futility of doing so and the danger, according to the graphic description given by the delegate from Detroit, of imitating King Canute who tried to stem the incoming tide by brandishing his sceptre at it and ended up, as could be expected, soaking wet. This is why there were various stresses on small-scale projects or on structural changes, on modest initiatives to improve the lot of the poor or on worldwide attempts to oppose the system. And yet it was clear to all that, if neo-liberalism is an ideology which places market forces above the human person, then we have no choice but to condemn it and work against it. The whole

⁷ Alvaro Alemany, S.J., "*Informe al Provincial de España.*"

issue consists in knowing whether this interpretation corresponds with the economic reality from country to country.

Some subjects never came up, most notably, the political dimension. None of the fifteen reflection groups considered the political context of the social apostolate. It remains for the participants to determine whether this was an organizational error or simply the reflection of a worldwide situation in which economics increasingly takes over all areas of life. Another noticeable lacuna was the absence of any real debate about differing positions, beyond the surely necessary fraternal dialogue. Again, this fact is open to various interpretations. A delegate from Argentina wondered whether, in the interests of recognizing that we are different and accepting one another as such, were we avoiding confrontation and outdoing each other in prudence?

The Congress is not the final word on what the social apostolate should be, but rather one more step in the process of discovery, a process that will have to be carried on in all the Provinces, involving all Jesuits and co-workers in the coming years.

"They came alive and stood upright"

Some walls have come down in Berlin and in South Africa, but others are still there, visibly in Korea and invisibly in Africa. Still others seem reinforced between Mexico and the United States or India and Pakistan, within Israel/Palestine or Bosnia Herzegovina, and, on a lesser scale, countless instances of division everywhere, exclusion, marginalization. From the days when Ignatius and his companions sought to bring peace between those who had fallen out, up until the recent years when the heirs of Ignatius committed themselves to the struggle for faith and justice, our society and culture resemble in significant ways that boundless plain filled with dry bones awaiting the voice of the Lord: "Come from the four winds, O Spirit, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live" (Ezekiel 37:9).

The image of skeleton, nerves, sinews, flesh, skin and spirit was in no way meant to suggest that the desolate scene spread before Ezekiel has an application to the social apostolate of the Society. Entirely on the contrary, the general impression at Naples was of a social apostolate enjoying great vitality and a promising future. The Congress was a living and life-giving reality, mirroring an apostolate which is now renewing itself precisely because it has never lacked for energy.

With the Congress and now after the Congress, our role as Jesuits becomes clear. "We leave Naples filled with hope (despite the difficulties of the challenges that await us) and encouraged to draw still closer to the suffering of the people and to design our work better in the face of the great social challenges of today." The image from Ezekiel is not meant to suggest the dryness of the heaped-up bones, but to instill in us all the hope and vitality of his prophecy: "I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done it, says the Lord" (Ezekiel 37:14).

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"An exchange of gifts"

Michele Cardinal Giordano
Archbishop of Naples

The Gospel of Matthew, 23:37-39

"Blessed are those who come in the name of the Lord!" These joyful words of St. Matthew welcome you, esteemed Fathers Assistant and Provincials and brothers in Christ, to the city and the archdiocese of Naples.

I am delighted to welcome you, dear companions of the Society of Jesus coming from all corners of the world nearby and far away, representing the social apostolate of the Society of Jesus. I am very happy to welcome you to Naples, first, because Naples as a city has so much to offer to you, and secondly, because in your reflection and prayer and discussion here during this week, you have something very valuable to offer to Naples. You make Naples a gift and Naples will respond in kind.

Those who come from far away may be interested to know that from the beginning the Society of Jesus has had links with Naples. Alfonso Salmerón (1515-1585), one of the early companions of St. Ignatius and a theologian at the Council of Trent, was the first Jesuit Provincial of Naples. In his Advent sermons of 1561, he denounced the corruption, the exploitation of loan sharks and the insensitivity of the rich towards the very poor. He urged the rich not to lose the merit of charity with vain ostentation. His preaching was open to the pressing social needs of the city. In a certain sense you can see him as the first representative of your apostolate here in Naples, more than four centuries ago.

Your recent General Congregation makes the point of emphasizing that St. Ignatius loved the great cities, but not necessarily for the same reasons that the courtly chronicles of his time, or the tourist brochures of today, would give. Ignatius looked for the greatest and most urgent needs, where his companions might serve for the greater glory of God.

In this sense he would say that Naples, like so many cities in the world today, is a great city in that, by bringing together such large numbers of people, it somehow focuses the tone and temper of our times. At the risk of over-simplifying, may I say that these "our times" began as a result of the geopolitical events of recent years with the so-called "collapse of the ideologies" and of powerful solidarities. Specific events like the fall of the Berlin Wall or on a larger scale the disappearance of the bi-polar world have left us, not with a sharp photo of an orderly era, but with a changing image fading in-and-out of focus.

Our countries and our cities are marked by widespread disorientation and an uncertainty which typifies especially the younger generations. There is clearly a vacuum in values, an erasing of memory, slavish imitation of the lowest cultural and ethical models in both individual action and social activities – all this promoted by national and international media networks.

This is true also of Naples and is at the root of the problems which have always marked the social issues in this city: work, first of all, which represents the expectation of the young and not so young of all social strata; then the problem of housing and, more generally, of unfit living conditions; the problems of widespread deterioration of the city outskirts, the availability and efficiency of public services, the very possibility of living together in society.

This situation was echoed in your last General Congregation, which clearly states: "All over the world, the increasing pace of urbanization leads to impoverished millions in the great cities.

These people are struggling with an agonizing cultural transition as they emigrate from rural areas and are forced to leave behind their traditional cultures" (D.4, n.5,3).

Would such a panorama have discouraged Ignatius of Loyola or Alfonso Salmerón? On the contrary! To speak about great problems, as you will do during the coming days, does not entail negativity, pessimism, bitterness or depression. Instead we look for signs of the human spirit and the Divine Spirit.

"There is also need for a better appreciation and understanding of **the signs of hope present in the last part of this century**, even though they often remain hidden from our eyes." We borrow the words of our Holy Father in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, written as if he were taking part in our liturgy today: "**In society in general**, such signs of hope include: scientific, technological and especially medical progress in the service of human life, a greater awareness of our responsibility for the environment, efforts to restore peace and justice wherever they have been violated, a desire for reconciliation and solidarity among different peoples, particularly in the complex relationship between the North and the South of the world" (*TMA* n.46).

With their lights and their shadows, then, the cities from which you have come and Naples in which you have arrived are "great" in ambiguities: the needs, the signs of hope, the strong reasons for cynicism, the ever-present opportunities. Such cities put everything together, even what does not fit together; such cities are indiscriminating cross-roads; in such cities the best human values and the most degrading counter-values rub shoulder to shoulder; such cities are the meeting place between "the global" and "the local."

So the city can be for us the symbol of the effort to make culture move toward human fulfilment. Your recent General Congregation describes the great cities as places "where this transformation of the human community was taking place" and so Ignatius "wanted Jesuits to be involved in this process" (GC 34, D.4, n.26), but how? with what attitude? Let us return to the moving Gospel passage proclaimed in our liturgy this morning.

When Jesus climbed the Mount of Olives with his disciples, and the city slowly came into view with all her beauty, just as from Cappella Cangiani here much of Naples spreads out below you as if all problems had fallen away ... the contemplation moved Jesus to cry out, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but you were unwilling!" (Matthew 23:37).

Jesus' poignant cry of compassionate love is an entire pedagogy for you, dear brothers, in your Social Apostolate Congress and for all of us Neapolitans: if you do not love the city, you will not see the city and, if you do not see the real city compassionately, you will not be able to change the city.

"We recognize, along with many of our contemporaries, that without faith, without the eye of love, the human world seems too evil for God to be good, for a good God to exist" (GC 34, D.2, n.11), and too evil for us to be able to involve ourselves in the transformation of the city. Your look at the city has to be sharpened through intelligence and then transformed into analysis so that, beneath the appearances, you see the problems; but your problematic analysis of the city also has to be transformed through prayer into compassionate love so that, amidst all the problems, your heart embraces your poor brothers and sisters as the heart of Jesus embraced his beloved Jerusalem; and

finally your loving solidarity will become the concrete expression of the imitation of the love of God for all people, in gestures of disinterested love.

And so this points to a religiosity illuminated by Christian faith, which includes and incarnates the biblical, messianic and liberation roots of the Christian tradition, and – following the ecclesial awareness developing over recent decades – combines evangelization and human development, service of faith and promotion of justice, faith and solidarity, religious commitment and concrete commitment for moral, social and civil recovery.

You have not forgotten my words of welcome: You make Naples a gift and Naples will respond in kind. And so this is the gift which you come to share with Naples – your question: "How to bring the Good News to society and culture?" The gift of a question, it might seem strange, but I insist that you have something to offer and share with the Church, with Naples: not a ready-made solution which, rushing into a super-market, one can pick up off a shelf; not a single model to copy and repeat; but with the courage of your tradition, a tireless search for ways of approaching the great problems, respectful of their complexity and resisting the temptation to reduce everything to simple answers, that is ideological ones, and patiently finding solutions....

Your week-long International Congress of the Jesuit Social Apostolate will be a gift to Naples – I speak of the city, I speak of the Archdiocese – if you show the courage of the spirituality and tradition of St. Ignatius and Alfonso Salmerón. I encourage you to continue being faithful to this tradition, capable of combining creativity in facing problems with a sincere "thinking with the Church." May the energy with which you breach conventional frontiers, may the ardour with which you take the side of the poor and help give them voice, may the openness with which you incorporate Christians and others of good will into your projects – may all your zeal for justice in society and culture be handily matched by your deep fidelity to Christ and to his Church. Help the Church to hear the cry of the poor. Help the poor to hear the Good News which the Church offers them!

I make my own the charge given you by the recent General Congregation: "Your 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 honour 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" (GC 34, D.4, n.26).

May the compassionate love of Christ mysteriously and historically incarnate in the Church shine upon everything you are and do, here at Naples during this week and, once returned to your communities, during the years and decades to come.

My dear brothers, in a few moments we will recite together the prayer that concludes my *Letter to the Citizens and the Public Institutions* (1994). These are the wishes with which I would like to characterize the exchange of gifts which I ask God to grant to our City and Archdiocese of Naples and to your Jesuit Congress of the Social Apostolate: "Your Kingdom come, the Kingdom of your

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Gospel of peace, of reconciliation, of brotherhood, the Kingdom of the Good News today, of all possibility of new life.⁸

Solemn Blessing to Open the Congress⁹

May God the Father, rich in mercy, give you eyes to see the needs and sufferings of your brothers and sisters. Amen.

May Jesus Christ, our brother and saviour, guide you in your faithful effort to serve the poor and the suffering. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit and Consoler flood you with the light of his word to comfort the weary and the oppressed. Amen.

And may the blessing of Almighty God,
Father + Son + Holy Spirit,
descend upon you and your Congress,
and remain with you and your people forever.
Amen!

June 16th, 1997

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⁸ *Promotio Iustitiae* 62 (September 1995), 84.

⁹ Cf. Eucharistic Prayer V/C

"To see with new eyes"

Vittorio Liberti, S.J.

Fathers Assistant, Fathers Provincial and all Fathers, Brothers and Scholastics gathered here for the International Congress of the Social Apostolate, I am happy to greet you and extend to you my warmest welcome with a strong sense of gratitude to the Lord who "calls us from every place upon earth."

Apart from General Congregations, I believe that this Congress is the most numerous international gathering of the Society until now, with the most representative and universal participation of Jesuits. Perhaps for the first time in our history an entire sector of the apostolate has come together, a fact that raises great expectations and hopes within the Society and among those near to us and with whom we work — and of course also in me.

With great joy, then, I say to you all: "Welcome to Naples!" And I say it as Provincial of Italy, as your fellow Jesuit, and also but especially as a Neapolitan, born in the heart of old Naples in a house on the Piazza del Gesù across from the Gesù Nuovo church and the Jesuit residence with its centuries-long tradition.

1. As a Neapolitan ...

Coming as you do from all over the world, you probably have not yet had time or opportunity to visit this magnificent city, renowned internationally as the city of sun, sea and pizza ("*O sole mio*" is a neapolitan song). I would like to introduce the city to you personally and describe her more typical features.

Starting from the Piazza del Gesù, you can venture forth into the crowded streets of the historic city centre: the façades of the *palazzi* with their antique beauty and perhaps a touch of decay, all visible traces of a past rich with incomparable art and culture.

In the many churches of the old city, with their baroque exuberance or gothic splendour (along with the Gesù, other famous ones include Santa Chiara and San Lorenzo Maggiore): here you catch a sense of the people's lively religiosity tainted though it often is by ancient beliefs and superstitions. Among the saints venerated, pride of place belongs to San Gennaro whose blood, preserved in an ampulla, miraculously turns liquid every year in the presence of a large crowd of Neapolitans. If the blood liquefies, the city's protection is assured. But if it doesn't...!

These forms of popular religiosity can surely be regarded as instances of pure folklore. Yet we should not forget that the miracle of San Gennaro is the occasion for reawakening, in a quasi-sacramental way, the witness to the faith of a martyr for the Church and the city of Naples. Beneath the popular forms of religiosity lies a truly rich treasure which we are not always able to recognize.

But the true Naples of popular old traditions, the Naples of washing hung out to dry, of shouting from house to house, the Naples of bel canto, imagination, and the art of arranging an

agreement, this is the Naples you can discover above all by walking through the maze of narrow streets known as the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, the Spanish Quarter.

This Naples is closed to those on package-tours out of fear for their safety, but accessible to intrepid "do-it-yourself" tourists who want to immerse themselves in the Neapolitan essence which is to be found especially here.

Nowadays, unfortunately, drugs have made delinquency and petty crime much more violent and dangerous than the formerly widespread but innocuous pickpocketing which often used to be a source of amusement because of the amazing dexterity with which it was carried off. Moreover the *Camorra* (the Naples version of the Mafia) has contributed to all this. Operating outside the law and at an enormous cost in violence and loss of human life, it has stained the colour and vitality of the city centre and other neighbourhoods, dragging them into the limelight of national and international journalism.

Just last Wednesday came news of a shooting at one o'clock in the afternoon in the neighbourhood of *Salita Arinella*. Seven hit-men opened fire on their opponents in the middle of a crowd, killing one victim and wounding another. But a young mother was also slain returning home with her four-year-old son, and a student was wounded.

The streets of the Spanish Quarter teem with "*scugnizzi*," kids who make their home these because their large families live in what are called "*bassi*," cramped one-room flats at street level behind the shops.

In a typical Neapolitan family, certainly extended and not nuclear, poverty goes hand in hand with expansive generosity and a deep sense of hospitality, but also with shrewdness. The art of arranging an agreement, the art of survival with sometimes really creative ingeniousness are a Neapolitan specialty. Despite an air of resignation and philosophical abandonment to fate, the Neapolitan never quenches hope and never gives up, neither in day to day life nor in history.

But poverty is still a powerful force, today with the additional spectre of unemployment especially among young people, and this reaches disturbing levels. As a consequence, a heavy dependence on the bounty of public funding has grown up marking not only the mass of people but even the entrepreneurial class for many generations.

I hope this descriptive overview helps Naples seem more familiar to you, serves as a sort of interpretive key, and makes you already feel at home from now on.

At bottom, the difficulties and sufferings of this city, as well as its resources and complexity, are common to cities all the world over. You have probably experienced the same things in your daily routine and the places where you work. Thus you cannot help but feel at home because, in this city's every aspect, whether positive or negative, you will find something of the reality which is your own.

Over 300 years ago a 31-year-old Jesuit, Francesco de Geronimo or Francis Jerome (1642-1716), pleaded to be sent to the missions in India or China. He was sent instead to Naples (those Provincials!) and remained here for the rest of his life — about 40 years — dedicated to the popular missions.

The popular missions consisted in sermons given in the squares and along the streets. Francis set out to work in every part of town, from the *Maschio Angioino* to the Spanish Quarter. He reached out to sailors and galley slaves, to prisoners and the sick. He organized an "Artisans' Confraternity" of laypeople who provided him with most effective help in the missions. He offered the Spiritual Exercises to all sorts of groups, in monasteries, in boarding schools for young people, in prisons and to galley slaves.

Francis constantly sought to comprehend the most urgent needs and to help those in great difficulty. In this way he became the apostle of the city and a Neapolitan saint, even though he came from Grottaglie, a small town in the hinterland near Taranto.

What strikes me about him is his example of living an intense missionary life while remaining here in his own country. To go away, to leave one's homeland forever, has traditionally been considered the essence of a missionary vocation. But is this really true? May the essence of such a vocation not consist, rather, in the ability to see the familiar and the everyday with ever new eyes?

The classic missionary (and we have so many examples in the Society) has always been regarded as an open-minded and zealous man, unafraid of weariness and privation, eager to get beyond appearances and to penetrate the culture of the people he serves in order to gather the hidden resources and proclaim the Gospel.

St. Francis sent as a missionary to his own land: is this not what he did? No matter where we find ourselves, his example would have us look with new eyes, new spirit, new ideas, at the reality we encounter and work in every day. It is a challenge to maintain his same zeal and enthusiasm. It is an encouragement not to waste our apostolic energy in merely preserving what already exists and the daily routine.

2. As Provincial ...

And this brings me to my welcome as Provincial. I welcome you to a rather large Province of over 900 Jesuits, the result of the merger, some 20 years ago, of five Jesuit Provinces. Today in Italy there is a single Jesuit Province divided into three Regions, with a Provincial and three Regional Superiors.

As for the social sector, I refer you to the *Social Apostolate Catalogue* which you received when you registered. You see that in each of the three Regions there is a significant social work.

In northern Italy, we have the Association of St. Marcellino in Genoa, a centre to assist and rehabilitate the homeless in one of the poorest downtown districts. Around 400 lay co-workers are involved at St. Marcellino. The Association's activity consists not only in generously serving the least and the poorest, but in making new energies available which might spur them on to a change for the better. So many among both the guests and also the co-workers have changed their attitude and stance toward life.

In central Italy, the Astalli Centre in Rome, housed in the building of the Province Curia, is set up to receive and help refugees. As part of the Jesuit Refugee Service, it is an Italian presence in

the larger international scene, to confront the urgent needs of those who, for a variety of basically political reasons, have been uprooted from their home countries.

Finally in southern Italy there is the Emmanuel Community with headquarters in Lecce, but spread throughout the south, including here at Casandrino nearby. This work started as a service to the handicapped, but over the years has developed into a well-organized chain of interdependent works of hospitality and formation. Worth special mention are the services provided, in over thirty local centres, for the recovery of drug abusers.

In Italy, we also have three centres of social studies: the San Fedele Centre in Milan; the well-known Pedro Arrupe School for Political Formation in Palermo, and the Institute of Social Studies and Research (ISERS) at the Pontical Faculty of Theology in Southern Italy, here in Naples. The centres in Milan and Palermo – north and south – have begun to pool their efforts and collaborate in publishing the review, *Aggiornamenti Sociali* (Social Renewal). By means of study and reflection, in conferences and publications, all three centres carry on their work with a view to the inculturation of the faith and increased Christians participation in the political, cultural and social life of Italy.

Albania is also an integral part of our Province: it is a country which needs to rebuild everything, starting from nothing. How are we to understand, within our mission, such tasks of reconstruction and of social economic, political, and – perhaps above all – cultural development?

Concerning the social sector of the Society's mission, I have as Provincial asked myself a series of questions in urgent need of response, and these I would now like to share with you.

The connection between action and reflection in the social field is not at all clear and needs to be grounded anew and find new points of contact. I was delighted to learn that the preparatory meetings for this Congress held in the different Assistancies were an occasion to start dialogue between "the head" and "the feet," that is, those who formulate theories and those who work in the field, between those who think critically and those who work actively in the social area. The dialogue between cultural centres and social service centres, and the dialogue between those who work in social areas and those who reflect on social issues, strike me as indispensable for giving new impetus to our social apostolate. But even these dialogues are not enough.

It is necessary to understand **what relationship these social initiatives have with the proclamation of the Gospel**. It is not always easy to situate action and reflection for justice in the perspective of faith and within theological reflection, considering the complexity and concreteness of the problems to be faced daily. On this theme we have too often been limited to merely rhetorical flourishes.

The proclamation of the Good News to the poor can take on so many dimensions – charity, justice, structures, thought, culture, solidarity – and in practice we should not neglect any of them. We need both "head" and "feet" – and many more things as well!

In the relationship between faith and justice, how does culture fit? What does it mean, in the words of the Italian Bishops' Conference, "to render the Gospel message culturally and socially relevant and in this way make a valid contribution to the future of our country"?¹⁰ We are being asked to make room for the Good News in cultures, with a view to integral human liberation.

¹⁰ Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (CEI), *Con il dono della carità dentro la Storia*, n.25

With a social type of action one is also creating culture, and it is important to be aware of it. And so we must continually question ourselves: what are we really proposing to society? What culture are we in fact promoting? What exactly are we communicating, the Good News or some ideology or another in which we are constantly immersed, perhaps without even being aware of it?

The response to these questions would have each of us always questioning himself and finding time for deep reflection. All these questions, still far from having a definitive answer, clearly show how important and unavoidable is rethinking our way of proceeding in social activity. The goal, the objective toward which we are moving, is to proclaim the Kingdom, make culture, remake society. All three – proclaim the Kingdom, make culture, remake society – may be seen as synonymous.

The questions I am asking as Provincial do not end here. Let us recall GC 32 and in particular Decree 4: "For us, the promotion of justice is not one apostolic area among others, the 'social apostolate'; rather, it should be the concern of our whole life and a dimension of all our apostolic endeavours" (n.47).

As Provincial I also feel very responsible for this dimension which should involve the whole life of every member of the Society and every one of our apostolates. Without getting lost in details, let me mention at least two important questions.

The General Congregations and all our documents often encourage and urge each Jesuit and the whole Society to develop social awareness and attention to the poor in our mission and in our life style. Perhaps this very insistence is a subtle hint that everything is not going along as it should. If the poor are far from our eyes, they gradually grow distant from our hearts as well. How can we keep vitally near to the poor and in solidarity with them in our daily life? Why is it so difficult to grapple with the themes of poverty, justice, culture and dialogue in our works and in our communities?

As for the Scholastics, even though all of them will not be missioned to the social apostolate, still they all should be helped to discover and live the social dimension. So, what kind of formation to provide them with in the socio-cultural field? What influences should they be exposed to as a basis intellectual reflection? What sort of special studies should they be directed toward? It is not a matter of multiplying experiences, surely, but of promoting a real integration, a new life style.

Programmes of formation have, as a matter of fact, been under revision all these recent years. But if the "adult" communities of formed Jesuits and their apostolic works do not change, the scholastics, who in their formation years have perceived and lived values such as sharing with the poor and feeling part of the social reality around them, will be apt to forget these values once they pronounce their final vows.

As you know, one of the Provincial's responsibilities is that of establishing a priority of needs – deciding on means, times, places – in which to invest the available vital energies. For this I need the expertise of many Jesuits in order to set in motion a serious programme of discernment, of a kind that will nourish a renewed and vigorous apostolic impetus.

I am sure that relevant ideas and elements will emerge from this week in Naples. I turn confidently to you of the social sector and ask your help in discovering the roads to follow in order to encourage our drawing near to the poor so that, in all our apostolates, we may learn how to give

priority attention to the emarginated and to the new forms of poverty, in order to redesign our community life style, in order to face all the challenges which new apostolic planning brings with it. I am counting on you!

3. As a brother Jesuit ...

From the outset I have wanted to speak with you in candour and simplicity, and I am confident that this will be your style of proceeding during the coming days. Now I would like to conclude these remarks with some words "from the heart" as a fellow Jesuit who feels the need to tell something of himself and his own life.

Before my appointment as Provincial (just nine months ago), I had been working for over 20 years in the field of university chaplaincy. Right after ordination, my first assignment was to the university community in L'Aquila. It was the early 1970s. Some of you will have personally lived through that time, others will have heard tell of it, and surely everyone recalls the energy and hopes and ferment of radical change which inspired the university, the Church and society in general. At that time the Decrees of GC 32 encouraged us toward the preferential option for the poor, and we sought to put it into practice, not only in India or Latin America, but right here in Italy.

At that time in L'Aquila, in a ghetto called Lazzaretto, a number of homeless people had occupied an abandoned convent next to the cemetery. They lived in a situation of promiscuity and filth that is truly indescribable. From a hygienic point of view, their living conditions were inhuman — some would say "disgusting" — and they lived at the extreme edge of "normal" society. But at the same time a climate of mutual help developed among them, a kind of "solidarity among the poor" in their own way of doing things. They were together and they took care of one another.

At a certain point one of my fellow Jesuits became aware of their situation, drew near to them and finally went to live with them for a few months. His idea was to awaken the city to the situation of these emarginated people so that they might reintegrate into the fabric of society. We other young Jesuits supported him from outside with efforts to attract the attention of L'Aquila's academic community, the Church and the whole city, publicizing the facts and bringing pressure to bear for a solution. We were completely taken up with this initiative. Finally, the municipal administration found a solution, just as we had wanted and pushed for: the people were relocated in clean, normal public housing. But the solution proved to be the beginning of the end. They found themselves separated from one another, scattered, still more on the margin than before, in anonymous flats. In the space of a few years they died, one after the other.

It is a sad, dramatic and complicated story. Living through the experience tore me apart, to the point of calling into question my identity as a priest (I had just recently been ordained) and as a believer. I asked myself, "What sense is there in what I'm doing?" In such a state of turmoil I asked to be sent early to tertianship, and this turned out to be truly providential.

Looking back today I see with greater clarity that for us those homeless people had lost every human dimension and were reduced to a merely political or sociological category. Our enthusiasm for social justice, as we understood it, made us lose sight of the wider perspective, and the good we hoped for ended up frustrated.

We were a group of very active Jesuits and we plunged into social action, but without the support of real analysis and shared critical reflection. We wanted to apply to those poor people our ideal of social justice (a real house, clean and tidy) without asking ourselves if they could share this ideal. We made them our banner, a cause to fight for and feel gratified about, even if unconsciously so. We robbed those poor people of their sacramentality, their quality of being incarnation of Christ. The poor became an idol for us, a fetish, no longer the sacrament of Jesus.

Now, with years of distance, I see more clearly that **the preferential option for the poor**, which with so much enthusiasm we wanted to pursue, was not accompanied by **the contemplative option for Christ**. There was political union with the poor, but there was no real union with the Lord.

This story which as a Jesuit I bear in my heart and often call to mind, is still basically somewhat bitter for me, but I am content to be able to share it with you. I wanted to tell it in order to encourage you to keep asking yourselves the deep questions that have not yet found resolution – to rediscover the roots and rethink the fundamental elements of our social commitment.

4. Welcome to Naples!

One could consider this Congress a kind of tertianship of the social apostolate: a *schola affectus*, a new point of departure, a new commitment! During our week here in Naples we have a most valuable opportunity to exchange experiences, to pose questions together and try to find answers, learning to carry on dialogue in mutual respect. I am happy to be able to listen to you and to ponder, discuss and pray with you.

If, as the social sector, you achieve some of the objectives of this Congress, especially in the long and difficult work with the poor in your respective countries and your home Provinces, you will be of help to the mission of the whole body of the Society. All this motivates me and makes me enthusiastic as a Jesuit and as Provincial. I would like to see this Congress animated by an unflagging spirit of searching, carried on with courage and humility.

Once more I extend to you all my welcome to Naples, to the Italian Province and to the Social Apostolate Congress. Following the example of St. Francis Jerome, let us ask the Lord to open our eyes, our ears and our hearts so that we may be able deeply to renew this wonderful mission He has entrusted to us. With the intercession of St. Francis Jerome, I wish for myself and I wish all of you the great success of our Congress which I hereby declare officially open!

June 20th, 1997

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"A paschal love for the world"

Notes prepared for June 20th, 1997

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.

It is surely one of the graces of our meeting that we did not feel called to produce a final document. In this way each of us has been able to contribute to this process being born which will result, with God's grace, in the definitive formulation by 1999 of the characteristics of the social apostolate of the Society. So these brief words are simply my contribution to a work-in-progress, and they are meant above all to express gratitude for all that you have said here at Naples and especially for all that you do in an apostolic area which is often viewed with suspicion and which will always be difficult and misunderstood.

It is no surprise that at this point I think of so many Jesuits who still do not feel comfortable with this orientation of the Society's. In one of the preparatory reports you could read that, while many Jesuits appreciate the importance of direct social involvement, they acknowledge that they themselves feel unable to be on the front lines. There are also Jesuits who fear the effects of social action and who are suspicious about the motivations of those involved in it. Furthermore, social Jesuits are often accused of neglecting the faith dimension of their work. Unfortunately, all these were not able to attend the Congress and especially the liturgies.

Such failures of understanding within the Society remind me of so many critiques I have heard from civil and ecclesiastical authorities in recent times. There is the ambassador, convinced that the Society has betrayed its vocation by committing itself to the poor, who told me, "Father, that's none of your business!" There is the ecclesiastical official declaring social involvement to be incompatible with priesthood and thereby provoking strong protests, thank goodness, from various episcopal conferences. Or consider the complaint that an entire Province allegedly changed the Holy Trinity into a social trinity: "watershed, herbal medicine, legal aid," working with the latter and keeping silent about the former. And what to say about a letter urging that the canonization of Blessed Alberto Hurtado of Chile not be promoted because he was too involved in social action which should remain the exclusive domain of lay Christians? How to react to a document which has been circulating for a month in the Americas alleging that all Jesuit education, including the Gregorian University, is but an attempt to undermine the Church? And yet the Holy Father himself never ceases to recall the social dimension of our faith and to underline the also very social character of every Jubilee year.

No doubt we have made mistakes and, as in any new area, we still have a lot to learn at our risk and peril. But all the failure to understand the promotion of justice does not seem to be lessening, probably — as Fr. Matthew Areeparampil said so well in his meditation on the Two Standards — because this justice for the Kingdom touches on what is dearest to us, our riches, our possessions. It is against this background that I would like to make a few observations which in no way constitute a final or official document.

1. History of our commitment to justice

The cry of the poor was heard by Ignatius and the first companions in an entirely natural and, of course, entirely spiritual way. They could not have imagined introducing themselves as companions of Jesus without assuming his preferential love for the poor. Ignatius wrote to the Jesuits in Padua that our commitment to follow a poor Lord quite naturally made us friends of the poor.

The three Jesuits whom we are celebrating in a special way this year, John-Francis Regis, José de Anchieta and Peter Canisius, while exceptional apostles, were also quite naturally inserted in the wretched situation of the poor of their day. And this they were, not only out of a charity freely distributing alms upon direct contact with misery; they also intervened at a social level by organizing welfare and employment, by setting up associations to defend the poor, and by getting involved in economic questions or in discussions, for example, about the right to take interest on capital. Yet Peter Canisius was well aware, like the others and like us, of the modest reach of such endeavours. In a homily on the multiplication of the loaves, he expressed his conviction that our social involvement, while it never adds up to more than the few loaves and fishes that we can provide, will nevertheless provoke miracles if only we put our whole heart into it.

Our predecessors seemed to draw near to the poor in a natural and spiritual way, and they responded generously even radically to their crying needs. Ignatius and many of the saints who came after him prompt us not only to open our hands to the poor but also to offer them our hearts as well. Yet it must be added that, from our point of view, things seem much more complicated today, and we are more aware of the danger of becoming resigned to a situation that looks hopeless, since there will always be poor people, or even the danger of submerging justice in an apparent charity.

It was with an equally natural and spiritual perspective and a calm sense of urgency that Father John-Baptist Janssens promulgated his *Instruction on the Social Apostolate* on October 10th, 1949.¹¹ The *Instruction*, which inspired many of the Society's social research and action centres, and Decree 32 of General Congregation 31, which took up the *Instruction's* orientations, became vigorous promoters of social action. This apostolate was called upon to animate the structures of social life — structures implicitly acknowledged as not very human, even inhuman — and, by force of circumstances, to change them.

The *Instruction* of 1949 and the Decree of 1965 envisaged the humanization of social life as a witness to the Gospel's great importance for the contemporary world, even if one did not yet talk in terms of unjust structures or, as the Pope has expressed it, "structures of sin." Both documents considered social activity as a particular sector among the apostolic priorities of the Society, although both documents were already using the formula: "this social dimension of all our apostolate today."

Both documents manifest an acute awareness of the risks involved. The evangelical concern, from which every form of mission in the Society flows, inspires us to "be very careful lest the social apostolate be reduced merely to temporal activity. This is all the more necessary because in these activities people are often affected by one-sided 'ideologies' and violent passions" (GC 31, D.32, n.3).

It was precisely the impassioned, insistent and urgent cry of the poor which impelled the Society toward Decree 4 of GC 32. This clamour made itself heard in Father Arrupe's call in 1973 to

¹¹ *Promotio Iustitiae* 66 (February 1997).

the alumni of the Society's schools, gathered at a congress in Valencia, Spain. "If we give the word 'justice' and the expression 'education for justice' all the meaning which the Church is giving them today, then in all sincerity and humility I believe we must answer that, no, we have not educated you for justice." His talk was not well received, and the president of the alumni resigned. Nevertheless, the demand to be men for others was born.

The Society experienced exciting debate and growing tensions as it prepared for the Congregation. India denounced the sin which marked social realities; these conditions required, in God's name, not only the palliative of social assistance but also the radical and rapid transformation of a non-violent social revolution. Accordingly, a model postulate from Mexico requested that the General Congregation situate all its deliberations on our life and our apostolic mission in today's world within this perspective of a fundamental option.

A reaction couched in language no less keen and no less polemical soon made itself heard: "The Gospel is conversion to the Father ... not to sociology. We have to be priests rather than sociologists." But such fears did not carry the day at the decisive moments of the history of our mission.

In Decree 4, the General Congregation would make its decisive choice. Father Arrupe warned of the price to be paid: "Any effort to promote justice will cost us something" (n.46). Here we get the new, combined option — service of the Gospel, work for the Kingdom of God, the struggle against poverty and injustice in the world. This option would never be withdrawn. Twenty years later, GC 34 renewed "our commitment to the promotion of justice as an integral part of our mission, as this has been extensively developed in General Congregations 32 and 33" (D.3, n.3).

So, has nothing changed? GC 34 itself answered this question by observing that "the struggle for justice has a progressive and gradually unfolding historic character as it confronts the changing needs of specific peoples, cultures and times" (D.3, n.5). Little by little — and this Congress proves it — the Society has become aware of other dimensions of the struggle for justice (n.6) which pose a great variety of challenges and risks.

We do well to look to St. Ignatius for the historical origins of our Jesuit commitment to justice and from him to trace the unbroken thread of inspiration all the way to Decree 4, which is also a decisive choice and a break and a reason to believe that this is what he would have done in our day. But what do we learn from this difficult rereading which would return to our origin and regain our road?

To repeat what our Fathers Ignatius, Janssens and Arrupe did, is exactly what they would not have wanted, and still less to use them to justify our prejudices. They were neither paralysed by the enormity of the needs and problems surrounding them, nor limited to well-tried solutions, nor scandalized by the imperfections (to say no more) of those in authority. To honour and imitate them by learning from them consists in this: to pursue a commitment to justice for the poor in an effective and profoundly Jesuit manner with the best possible comprehension of today's society and culture.

2. An incarnate spirituality and conversion

In renewing our commitment "to the promotion of justice as an integral part of our mission," Decree 3 of GC 34 insists on another point. Much more than Decree 4, it explains how "the vision of justice which guides us is intimately linked to our faith" and how "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" (n.4). Why this insistence? By way of an answer, Decree 3 says elsewhere that we have sometimes separated "the promotion of justice from its wellspring of faith," and it speaks of our dogmatism, our ideology, our timidity and our resistance to "the radicality of our mission of faith seeking justice" (n.2).

If we bring up these problems which seem to be of a spiritual order, does this not weaken Decree 4, as many Jesuits claimed after the recent General Congregation? The Latin American theologians never tire of repeating that liberation is not only a question of ethics or of effectiveness in historical terms; it is fundamentally a problem of spirituality. Spirituality, to be sure, but genuine spirituality, not as found at the level of abstract and ineffectual piety, of sentimentality which deigns to be moved by suffering without reacting, of sympathizing theories spun out on the unjust situation of this world, or of a piety which uses the poor in order to be close to the Lord. It is rather a spirituality which is lived out within a social involvement, within a social commitment, following Jesus, according to the Gospel. This commitment is an experience which involves our whole life. Saying it in the words of Msgr. Romero, the assassinated Archbishop of San Salvador: "To give life to the poor, one has to give of one's life and even give one's own life."¹²

Father Arrupe arrived by a different route at the same concrete conviction that social commitment is basically a question of incarnate spirituality. On the one hand, he admired the world's scientific and technological progress along with humanity's ability to resolve the problems of poverty brought about by that progress. On the other hand, he observed that humanity, with all the powerful means at its disposal yet held back by egoisms or private interests, apparently does not want to put an end to so much hunger and poverty. We have understood more thoroughly that poverty is not natural; even if it is not always produced directly by human hands, "it is now within human power" to overcome it "but we do not really want to" (GC 32, D.4, nn.20,27). Poverty and misery are never treated complacently in the Gospels. They are non-values which simply should not exist and which in no way express the will of the Creator.

Today there is a new kind of "complacent" poverty denounced by the Latin American Provincials in their letter on Neo-Liberalism¹³: it is considered "normal for millions of men and women on the continent to live and die in utter poverty." Growth, "when substantial, will increase income levels and trickle down to solve the situation of the disadvantaged." But the claim that the "impoverishment of millions of Latin Americans is the inevitable price for future growth" is a rationalization which the Provincials — and they are not the only ones — "cannot accept with equanimity."

So it is really not at all indifferent whether a person is moved by this or that spirit, by this or that spirituality. It is out of basic necessity, not wishful piety, that the recent General Congregation declares the promotion of justice to require, before all else, our own continuing personal conversion (D.3, n.17). An incarnate spirituality has chosen Christ who identifies himself with the poor and

¹² Oscar A. Romero, *«Cese la represión»*, Madrid: IEPALA, 1980, p.117.

¹³ "Letter and Study Document on Neo-Liberalism in Latin America," *Promotio Iustitiae* 67 (May 1997).

wants to be welcomed and served in them, in order that the poor be respected and assisted. It is only on this basis that we can utter the beatitude of poverty.

3. Current history: characteristics and problems

But we have still further to go. The social movement launched in the Society by Decree 4, was inspired no doubt by listening to the clamour of the poor and by an attitude of compassion and solidarity towards the flagrant injustices which ravage the world. But this option would not have been possible without a paschal vision, without an optimistic view of history, without a dynamic of openness toward a world which can be and lets itself be transformed. It is very heartening that, during this Congress, despite the difficult situations which you know so well firsthand, so many words of hope and optimism were uttered. This would not have been possible without a paschal vision of the promotion of justice.

But precisely, this openness to the world should not blind us to a whole series of disappointments which marred the enthusiasm generated by Decree 4, and it is this optimistic stance which GC 34 remained faithful to: "For us, frontiers and boundaries are not obstacles or ends, but new challenges to be faced, new opportunities to be welcomed" (D.26, n.27).

Logically enough, the General Congregation lists a series of critical situations affecting hundreds of millions of people, which call for special attention on the part of the Society. They are the marginalization of Africa, the social and economic paralysis in Eastern Europe, indigenous people and the discriminated against on the Indian subcontinent, the excluded of society, and refugees and displaced persons just about everywhere (D.3, nn.11-16).

Over the past five days of the Congress, you have raised crucial questions like the following:

Why such disillusionment in Latin America after so many hopes raised by the theologies of liberation?

Why do so many young nations, recently freed from the yoke of colonialism or dictatorship, find it impossible to pull out of their desperate state of underdevelopment?

Do not those previously oppressed quickly if not inevitably become the newly powerful who in turn cause new injustices?

Why, despite all our economic and financial theories, do the rich keep getting richer and the poor poorer?

And should we not also ask questions from an ecclesial point of view and admit that the opening of the Church to the world after Vatican II often led to rampant secularism, probably also because the spirit of openness was not, in the last analysis, linked with the power of the Gospel's demands? This brings on a wave of restoration which prefers a Christianity cut off from social reality; this brings on a resurgence of new movements or modern sects driven by an anti-social, that is, a disincarnate mysticism.

Despite its optimism founded on its hope and despite its refusal to turn back, the General Congregation dared to look reality in the face and, remaining entirely faithful to its openness to and its trust in the world, it recognized that "we bring this counter-cultural gift of Christ to a world beguiled by self-centred human fulfilment, extravagance and soft living, a world that prizes prestige, power, and self-sufficiency. In such a world, to preach Christ poor and humble with fidelity and courage is to

expect humiliation, persecution, and even death. We have seen this happen to our brothers in recent years" (D.26, n.5).

4. The world, yes or no?

In our experience of social commitment in the name of the Gospel, we realize that a sincere "yes" to the world is not self-evident. To believe in man and to love the world, is not so easy, because it also requires the strength to say "no," as well as the light and the discernment to know when to do so.

Sin can attach itself to whatever is positive and valuable. The normal corruption in the world (even in the fields of charity and development, non-governmental organizations and social movements) which each of us knows from his own experience, should certainly not be a reason to stop hoping against all hope and resign ourselves to efforts without results.

Decree 3 of the recent General Congregation radiates an undeniable enthusiasm and optimism: "Above all, we need to continue with great hope on our journey towards the Kingdom" (n.24). In this context of hope, our mission for justice, culture and dialogue impels us to be near people and with them in their daily life, like the first Jesuits to take once again to the streets of our cities, in order to read there in the very heart of people's existence the signs of the times, the signs of the Spirit's action. If God loves the world, our mission among people should reveal to them that, in all aspects of their existence, they are already grappling with God, whether they know it or not. For this reason the Ignatian call to mission is a call to be involved with the world, not to break with it; a call to become wide open to humanity where God is at work in all things, labouring for the salvation of all (D.26, n.7). To invoke a dynamic of openness in this way, which is also a dynamic of solidarity and hospitality and compassion, is to thank the many Jesuits and many non-Jesuits who at the inevitable risk of connivance have helped the Church of the Lord learn to become fraternal again and welcoming to the life of the poor and to work with all people in building a more human world (*Gaudium et Spes*, 57).

We are called to go all the way in our openness to the world, our "yes" to man. The faith which loves the world would be deluding itself if, in order to help the world, it needed to overlook the sin with which the world is marked. Such a blind love would not be worthy of faith; it would be merely a warm feeling unable to keep its promises. The love from which faith lives is not like that. It is rather a paschal love wherein the "yes" to the world dares face the "no" of the world squarely. Without the love of a crucified Christ, the openness to the world would close up before the poor in whom, from a purely human perspective, there is nothing good to see and everything to despise (Isaiah 53). Thus if our social commitment is authentically Jesuit, that of a companion of Jesus, then it will share with Christ all his faith in man and his world, all his loving Divine regard for humanity in this world, even if this gratuitous faith and the gift of this love end up paying the price of the cross.

5. Justice keeps no silence about God

What is justice? Should we not admit that justice has nothing to say about God and so our work in the promotion of justice is a secularizing, purely professional work?

Justice grows out of faith, as a necessary fruit, and GC 33 made them "not two juxtaposed, much less conflicting, goals" (n.42), but "a condition for faith's credibility"; "the struggle for faith and the struggle for justice which it implies" (GC 32, D.2, n.2), "the way to faith and the way to justice are inseparable ways" (n.8). Everything which GC 32, 33 and 34 said is true, and today we affirm them even more strongly because, in the light of our experience, we learn that justice as justice, which is truly born of faith equally witnesses to faith.

Faith in God and in his goodness, Christ present and at work in the world: this moves us to respond by committing ourselves to justice and, in doing this justice, one witnesses to a different way of living, one witnesses to the presence of a loving and saving God. "In this way our commitment to justice will simultaneously show forth the Spirit and the power of God" (GC 32, D.4, n.33). Thus the faith which does justice leads to the justice of the Gospel which in its turn conveys Good News, and to this people respond – a circular and reciprocal dynamic within which, ideally, the two poles become ever more difficult to distinguish in practice.

How then does the promotion of justice say something about God? The early inhabitants of this city of Naples were already aware that the most just justice can become the grossest injustice. Justice left to itself does not open the door to the just man, except in God. Not a matter of any justice whatsoever, but that justice which is evangelized by the New Commandment and visibly bears its marks. By being generous, gratuitous, inclusive, self-critical, self-giving and self-sacrificing, transforming, transparent, a bearer of values – in a word, charitable – the Jesuit service of faith and promotion of justice is "a single commitment which finds its coherence and deepest expression in the love of God and love of neighbour to which God calls us in the One Great Commandment" (GC 33, n.42).

The promotion of justice which is marked by the New Commandment "will respond to humanity's deepest yearnings, not just for bread and freedom, but for God and His friendship – a longing to be sons and daughters in His sight" (GC 32, D.4, n.33) by making room for God in people's lives.

Justice which makes room for God and which says something about God helps "people become more open toward God and more willing to live according to the demands of the Gospel" (GC 32, D.4, n.18), both as individuals and as groups, in culture and in the structures of society. This work "will make our preaching of the Gospel more meaningful and its acceptance easier" (n.46).

For if our work is not expressly for the "the justice of the Kingdom," then what values are we conveying? When people see our good social works, do they recognize us as men of God? (Yesterday Fr. Hermann Bacher spoke very clearly on this point.) Depending on the historical, cultural and religious context we can and should, like "the light of the world," make explicit use of the words and symbols of the faith. But the Gospel also speaks very clearly of "the salt of the earth" and tells us it is possible not to do it. Still, deep in the earth, salt does its work. Promoting the justice of the Gospel should never, to be sure, be confused with proselytism which is so prevalent among some sects. On the other hand, the fear or the risk of being accused of proselytism does not offer us an

excuse for systematically living our faith in secret, for hiding our faith, for making it purely a private affair or for failing to share our deepest convictions. If people ask us, they have the right to know why we struggle in this way on their behalf. And when we act justly it is all to the good that someone might discover and say, "Their God must be good, if they are so good – their God must be just, if they are so committed to the promotion of justice."

After stating the purpose of the Society – "to strive especially for the defense and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine," the Formula then "identifies a range of activities which mediate this goal" (GC34, D.2, n.7).

Among the activities which mediate our purpose, parochial or pastoral ministries – taking care of the faithful and confirming people in their faith – constitute **one** way of serving faith and promoting justice. But the promotion of justice is intrinsically linked, not to these ministries, but to the vocation and the mission of the whole Society, to the proclamation of the faith, to evangelization itself which the promotion of justice, as promotion of justice, achieves in its own fashion.

Thus the promotion of justice along with the communication of faith, the transformation of cultures and interreligious collaboration (D.2, n.19), are aspects of – points of entry into – **one** and the **same** single mission to bring the Good News to the world, to contribute to human liberation and salvation.

6. To preach in poverty

Finally, there is a problem that always leaves me rather uneasy, and I am pleased that it has been brought up in questions posed here during the Congress and sometimes addressed directly to the General. It is the problem of the expression of St. Ignatius which we are often fond of repeating: "to preach in poverty."

If our promotion of justice is to be evangelical, that is, marked by the New Commandment and expressive of the Good News, then what should we say about other hallmarks of Jesuit apostolate like competence based on a long and costly formation, "learning" and professionalism, effective planning and strategizing? Is all this not in open contradiction with our ideal of following the man Jesus, the Poor Man, who worked with poor means, who preached in poverty? Is it not in contradiction with what St. Ignatius asks of us? "Preaching in poverty" is accomplished, paradoxically, by struggling in poverty, with all competence and professionalism, with all the effective planning and indispensable strategies, because the poor deserve to have the best, the *magis* of our effort. For we make use of these impressive means, not to our own advantage, but always with the generosity, gratuity and non-violence which mark the commitment to the service of others, all the way without turning back and without recompense. On this point there is much more to discuss and many decisions to take. The true paradox of our apostolate is found here, between work for justice which is socially and culturally effective, and work for justice which is evangelically expressive of the Good News.

We rely on non-violence and gratuity; we accompany the poor and we encourage them; "we preach in poverty"; we put our hearts out there along with some new loaves and fishes (Canisius); and we do not end up with the winners but with Christ and the poor. Our response is a poor response, even though we joyfully share the people's "victories."

Having a poor person's heart, to overcome the injustices which create the Lazaruses of this world means being open to the reality that man neither lives by bread alone nor is only a socio-political exigency, but also hungers for culture and, finally, for a word of God. At first glance and from a purely human perspective, to accept this human truth seems to weaken the struggle for justice. It is not surprising therefore that the opening of the General Congregation to all this reality of the human person might give the impression of diminishing the seriousness of the commitment to justice. The fight for justice should never be separated from objective results and concrete means. It should aim at gaining everything possible in service of the poor. And the Society should keep using the expression "the promotion of justice" despite all its complications and ambiguities of a linguistic, biblical or theological order, in order to express a firm, concrete and genuine commitment. Otherwise, the concrete awareness of injustice will be lost in the Society.

However, both the one who wages the struggle and the one for whom the struggle is waged must open themselves, through the justice they seek, to evangelization, concretely, working together with all their fellow Jesuits who are also brothers in all these ventures. It is here that we find the specificity of Jesuit social commitment. The Society does not claim this commitment as exclusively its own, but takes it up as a response to the call of our Lord, carried out in fidelity to our Ignatian spirituality, while listening to the discernment of the General Congregations, and in generosity not for the sake of success in the struggle but with Christ in the beatitude of persecution. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for justice, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10).

7. The Mission

I want to express my wholehearted thanks to you all for the joy and the privilege of taking part in this Congress of the Social Apostolate of the Society of Jesus. May you continue your apostolate enriched by the reflections, the prayers and the proposals of these days, in order to serve the faith and promote justice, a concrete justice, an evangelizing justice, in every culture and in every society. My hope is that we continue to find, in our prayer and contemplation, in our community life and in our religious and priestly identity, the primary source and the ultimate fruit of this mission of ours: to be "in solidarity with the poor and outcast, so that we can take up their cause under the standard of the Cross" (D.3, n.17).

June 20th, 1997

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