

The Keynote Address of Fr. General at Loyola on the 11th of July, 2018

- **University as a source of Reconciled Life**
- **University a Project of social transformation**



(Excerpts from Fr General's address at the World Meeting of Universities entrusted to the Society of Jesus, Loyola, Spain, 10 July 2018)

Through its commitment to the university, the Society seeks to contribute to turn the word of Jesus into a historical truth: ...I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly (John 10:10). Reconciliation is possible when there is life. Life produces reconciliation, which in turn makes life full. Reconciliation is a way of returning to life and making it grow towards fullness. A full life entails a kind of love capable of giving one's life so that all may have life.

The growing commitment of the Society of Jesus to the university's endeavour takes on its meaning through the desire to effectively contribute to enabling a dignified full life for each and every human being, both in the present and in the future. Living fully means plunging into the broad range of skins and cultures that make up humanity. It involves delving into the complexity of the historical and social processes currently underway. Deep, complex processes of change, which take place at different paces and fill us with uncertainty in the face of a future that is increasingly difficult to imagine ... The university that we seek, as a source of life, deeply committed to the processes of reconciliation, experiences in its own daily

existence the tensions of the social and cultural complexity into which it is inserted with all its being. The university also lives in the uncertainty of the historical period in which it operates, and experiences in its own being the fragility of life, because it feels and knows itself to be fragile.

Where do we come to and what is our purpose? As Universities under the responsibility of the Society of Jesus we have been building this space for a long time. Deusto and Loyola are physical locations where we can meet because they are aligned with the university calling of the Society of Jesus, that is, a universal calling, as were the Ibero American University of Mexico in 2010 and the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, in 2015. These physical locations allow us to create the spiritual space in which we find ourselves as educators and collaborators in the mission of humanising history from our place at the university.

Therefore, we came to this physical location, the University of Deusto and the Shrine of Loyola, because it is also the spiritual place where we feel that we can grow within the universal dimension of the contribution of the universities, inspired by the Ignatian charism to strive for the betterment of humanity through reconciliation and justice. We came, therefore, to become strengthened as a universal apostolic body inspired by the Ignatian charism, united by a fruitful humanist intellectual tradition, rooted in the Christian faith. We came to share our view on history and on the world that we find in the Gospel and the Spiritual Exercises. To look at the world and at history with the love of the One and Triune God means to be moved by the cry of the millions of human beings who migrate seeking better living conditions; of the victims of violence; of the impoverished

who demand justice; of those who are despised for the colour of their skin or the religion they profess; of those who are denied their rights to participate democratically in public life, because political power is monopolised by people at the service of individual interests, indifferent to the Common Good and the protection of the environment.

Adopting this perspective represents a considerable epistemological challenge for our scientific work, which seeks to penetrate reality, discover the roots of injustice and contribute to propose alternatives for economic and social transformation. A perspective that also becomes a pedagogical challenge for our teaching, to ensure that we are capable of transmitting the life that originates from it. From this way of seeing, of placing ourselves vis-à-vis reality, we embody the preferential option for the poor, by which the university becomes a project of social transformation to generate a full life. This challenge takes on new dimensions when we think of them as a global transformation. The commitment to the transformation of the world today has a local, regional and global scope. These are complex and interdependent processes. We came, therefore, to find a way, together, to go beyond what we normally achieve in our local societies, to have the best possible impact on our world, at regional and global levels.

When the university is conceived as project of social transformation, it moves towards the margins of human history, where it finds those who are discarded by the dominant structures and powers. It is a university that opens its doors and windows to the margins of society. Alongside them comes a new breath of life that makes the efforts of social transformation a source of life and fulfilment. The 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus is an invitation to focus on the mission of the universities from a companionship perspective in a mission based on justice and reconciliation. Our educational apostolates at all levels, and our centres for communication and social research, should help form men and women committed to reconciliation and able to confront obstacles to reconciliation and propose solutions. The intellectual apostolate should be strengthened to help in the transformation of our cultures and societies. ♦