

Patxi Álvarez de los Mozos, SJ

SERVING THE POOR

PROMOTING JUSTICE



A Historical Overview of
the Social Apostolate of the Society of Jesus



Serving the Poor,
Promoting Justice

«CLAVIUS» Series

11

Patxi Álvarez de los Mozos, SJ

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A Historical Overview of the Social Apostolate
of the Society of Jesus



Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES)
General Curia of the Society of Jesus
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“So great are the poor in the sight of God
*that it was especially for them that Jesus
was sent into the world*”.

St. Ignatius to the Jesuits at the College of Padua
August 6th, 1547



Contents

Foreword	13
1. Introduction	15
1.1 A Historical Overview	17
1.2 Contents of the Chapters	19

THE WAY OF PREPARATION

2. In Jesus' Way: The Ignatian Tradition	27
2.1 Ignatius' Conversion	29
2.2 St. Ignatius' Trip to his Hometown Azpeitia	32
2.3 Social Action in the First Generation	35
2.4 Poverty and Service to the Poor in Ignatius' Texts	38
2.5 A Poor Society Serving the Poor	42
3. Faced with the Victims of Industrial Progress: The Challenge of Labour	47
3.1 Two Revolutions that Break with History	48
3.2 The Workers' Situation	52
3.3 Initial Reactions by the Church	56
3.4 <i>Rerum Novarum</i> , the Birth of Church's Social Doctrine	61
3.5 The Society's Response	65

3.6	Opening up to the Realities of the Labour Question	76
4.	A Voice of Protest: The Reaction to Fascism	81
4.1	Rising Fascism in the Tumultuous Interwar Period	83
4.2	The Relationship with Fascism in Italy	88
4.3	The Situation in Germany	93
4.3.1	The Publication of the Encyclical <i>Mit brennender Sorge</i>	95
4.3.2	The Society's Reaction	96
4.3.3	Rupert Mayer	97
4.3.4	Alfred Delp	100
4.3.5	Other Jesuits	104
4.4	The Church's Position in Spain	106
4.5	The Protection of Jews during World War II	110
4.6	An Irrepressible Cry for Human Dignity	112
5.	Like the Leaven in the Mass: The Workers' Mission	115
5.1	The Decay of Religious Faith in the Working World	116
5.2	The Birth of a New Form of Apostolate	118
5.3	A Testing Time	120
5.4	The Resumption of Worker Initiatives	123
5.5	Inspired by Mysticism	126
5.6	The Eagerly Awaited Support from the Society as an Institution	128
5.7	Changes to Working Conditions	132
5.8	Loyalty to a Vocation	135

CONSOLIDATION

6. The Greater Good of Social Action:	
Social Centres	141
6.1 The Adoption of the Social Apostolate by the General Congregations	143
6.2 Fr. Janssens Gives Impetus to the Social Apostolate	147
6.2.1 A Magna Carta: The Instruction on the Social Apostolate (1949)	148
6.2.2 Other Measures Given Impetus by Fr. Janssens	154
6.3 The Social Centres	157
6.4 Characteristics of the Social Centres	163
6.5 Social Centres: Contributions and Crossovers	165
7. A Prophet of Justice at the Head of the Society:	
Fr. Arrupe	169
7.1 Changes after World War II	173
7.2 The “Faith and Justice” Decree, General Congregation 32	179
7.2.1 General Congregation 31 and Later Years	179
7.2.2 Preparation and Evolution of General Congregation 32	183
7.2.3 Essential Contents of Decree 4	187
7.2.4 The Reception of Decree 4	190
7.3 Some Characteristic Contributions	194
7.4 The Birth of the Social Justice Secretariat	196
7.5 His Final Efforts to Promote Justice	198
7.6 A Persevering, Creative and Daring Man	201

8. Deepening the Promotion of Justice:	
New Perspectives	205
8.1 The Option for Justice in the Spotlight	206
8.2 The Contributions of General Congregation 34 ..	210
8.3 The Characteristics of the Social Apostolate Document	216
8.4 Fr. Kolvenbach’s Letter on the Social Apostolate	218
8.5 General Congregations 35 and 36: The Perspective of Reconciliation	221
8.6 A Time of Confirmation, Clarity and Depth	223

LATER DEVELOPMENTS

9. Where the Asphalt Ends:	
Education at the Margins	231
9.1 Fe y Alegría in Latin America	233
9.1.1 The Birth of Fe y Alegría	233
9.1.2 The Expansion of Fe y Alegría	235
9.1.3 Inspired by the Spirit	237
9.1.4 Popular Education and Social Promotion ..	239
9.1.5 A Political Vision of Education	240
9.1.6 A Work of Collaboration	241
9.2 Schools in India that Grow Among the Marginalised	243
9.2.1 Dalits and Adivasis	243
9.2.2 The Educational Service	245
9.2.3 Some Characteristics	247
9.3 The “Cristo Rey” Schools in the United States ...	248
9.3.1 The Educational Context	248

9.3.2	The Birth and Development of the “Cristo Rey” Schools	249
9.3.3	Who Attends these Schools	251
9.4	Other Initiatives	251
9.5	An Education Oriented towards Social Change .	254
10.	Exodus to the Peripheries:	
	Insertion Communities	257
10.1	Origins of the Insertion Communities	258
10.2	A New Theological Space	261
10.3	Transformation of Religious and Community Life	264
10.4	Community Life as a Sign	266
10.5	Community Life as Mission	268
10.6	The Value and the Dwindling of the Insertion Communities	271
10.7	Other Experiences: Hospitality Communities ...	273
10.8	Living Together with the Poor	276
11.	Accompany, Serve and Advocate:	
	the Jesuit Refugee Service	279
11.1	The Origins of the Jesuit Refugee Service	281
11.2	Later Developments	284
11.3	Accompaniment	289
11.4	The Educational Service	291
11.5	Reconciliation and Pastoral Service	293
11.6	Advocating for Refugees	295
11.7	A Work in Collaboration	296
11.8	An International Work Prepared for Urgent Responses	297

12. The Ecological Commitment:	
Protecting the Poor, Defending Creation	301
12.1 The Birth of Ecological Awareness	302
12.2 The Planetary Boundaries	304
12.3 Awareness within the Church	308
12.4 The Impact of Pope Francis’ Encyclical <i>Laudato Si’</i>	313
12.5 Reflections on Ecology in the Society	317
12.6 Ecological Action in the Society	323
12.7 A Growing Commitment	328
13. A Universal Horizon: Networking	331
13.1 The World Became Smaller	332
13.1.1 Global Issues	335
13.1.2 Great International Forces	335
13.1.3 International Decision-Making Spaces ..	336
13.2 The Society’s Networking	337
13.2.1 The Society’s Documents on Networking	339
13.2.2 Some Significant Networks	342
13.3 The Process of the Faith and Justice Mission	349
13.4 The Role of the Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology	352
13.5 Networks: a Necessity and a Task Ahead	354
14. Conclusion: Ignatian Spirituality as the Bedrock ..	357
14.1 Spiritual Sources	358
14.2 Some Necessary Conditions	365
14.3 Ignatian Characteristics and Tensions	368
15. Epilogue	379
16. Bibliography	381

Foreword

In 1969, at the initiative of Fr. Pedro Arrupe, the Secretariat for Social Justice was born. It was called *Jesuit Socio-Economic Development Secretariat (JESEDES)*. This title has undergone changes over the years and so did the type and method of working with and for the poor. The Secretariat, now called *Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES)*, commemorates its 50 years of promoting justice and reconciliation by the Society of Jesus, throughout the world. We have come a long way, though the journey has not been smooth or easy. The challenges we face today are much more complex and interconnected than in 1969 and require constant re-evaluation, reflection, analysis and discernment. In some places the work for social justice creates life threatening opposition, but there are always a dedicated band of Jesuits who continue the work.

We are at a historic moment in the Society of Jesus. The fiftieth anniversary provides an occasion to relook at our history, renew our commitment to walk with the poor, reinvigorate failing initiatives and strengthen the justice and reconciliation mission in the Society of Jesus. This must be done along with our collaborators, partners and many others who are in the same journey of seeking truth and justice.

Fr. Arturo Sosa, in his inaugural video message on the jubilee said, “The 50th anniversary is an opportune and historic moment—a *Kairos* moment as expressed in the Bible—for all of us in the Society of Jesus, to renew our commitment to the challenging mission of our vocation: a faith that does justice and seeks the reconciliation between us, with nature and with God.

This is not only a time of renewal for our institutions, social centres or for members of social apostolate. It is a moment that must permeate the entire Society of Jesus, all Jesuits and all our partners in the mission that we share with great joy.”

‘*Serving the Poor, Promoting Justice*’ comes as a perfect gift from Patxi Álvarez, SJ especially but not limited to the members of the social apostolate. His systematic, in-depth and critical reading of the history and events are extremely valuable. The reflections are well blended with the Ignatian spirituality that calls for this ‘*mínima compañía*’ to be at the service of the poor. It shows how the social apostolate at every moment and at every place was alert and sensitive to read the *signs of the times* and listen to the Spirit. It reveals amply the challenges faced and also the compassion, sensitivity, creativity and generosity shown by those men and women committed to justice at every moment.

‘*Serving the Poor, Promoting Justice*’ comes at the right moment, because we have the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) mandated by the Holy Father with some clear directions. And we are finding ways to implement them in the coming years. This book can be a good tool to read gratefully about the road we journeyed and to listen attentively to the signs of the present and discern the future.

I am deeply grateful to Patxi Álvarez, SJ for this unique contribution, which I believe, only he could make based on his readings, reflections, personal contact with those in the field, combined with his love for the poor and his vast experience of being the Secretary of SJES for 6 years, from 2011 to 2017. I had the privilege of working with him for 3 years (2012-2015) and I can assure all our cohorts that this book will inspire you not only to find God walking with the poor, but also lead you to work with Him among the poor.

Xavier Jeyaraj, SJ
Secretary, SJES

Introduction

The Jesuits understood that the life story of St. Ignatius of Loyola was a reference point on which to model themselves. The Lord's grace that he had received was not only individual, but corporate.¹ Through Ignatius, the whole Society had received a charism that subsequent generations had to share and adapt to each new period and specific set of circumstances.

The poor were part of Ignatius' life from the day of his conversion. After his recovery from the wounds he suffered in 1521 at the Battle of Pamplona he headed for Barcelona, coming to rest in Montserrat. There he abandoned his courtier clothes for a long garment made of sackcloth that covered him head to foot. He assumed a life of poverty, living among the poor. They would become his traveling companions and he tended to their needs in the hospitals² where he stayed on his pilgrimage.

Following Ignatius' example, the first companions served the poor in hospitals. They would stay in them and learn to live with those marginalised by society at the time. After the Society was founded, the Jesuits included the ministry of charity to the poor in the list of activities they practiced on a regular basis. Therefore, it can be said with authority that serving the poor formed part of the Society's mission from its earliest days.

¹ Translator's Note, henceforth (TN): "corporate"—of, relating to, or formed into a unified body of individuals.

² Hospitals were a type of shelter in which both sick and beggars resided and were cared for.

After the Suppression in 1773, the Society of Jesus was restored in 1814. By then, European societies had gone through the turbulent times of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. They were in a process of social, economic and political transformation. Despite many attempts, the society of the *Ancien Régime* would never return. Little by little, changes provoked by the Industrial Revolution, which began in Britain and spread throughout the continent, were taking shape. Industrial production was becoming more widespread and, associated with it, the rise of the bourgeoisie and increasing employment of workers in factories.

The workers would go on to form a new class of poor people. The Church, sensitive to this reality, would try to respond to the situation, as would the Society. It did so slowly, compared to the dizzying pace of social change brought about by this new industrialised society. The exodus of rural populations to cities, to join the mass of degraded and exploited workers, outpaced the ability of ecclesial actors to react to this new reality; they watched as, gradually, a whole sector of the population slowly and definitively abandoned both faith and Church. Nevertheless, there was no shortage of Church led initiatives serving the needs of the working classes, as had been the case in the past with other impoverished sectors, although they proved insufficient.

Throughout the nineteenth century, workers tried to organise themselves through different movements, generally subsumed under the banner of socialism. This came to be called the “Labour Question”, which encompassed their sufferings and struggles. At the end of the century, in 1891, Pope Leo XIII published the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*—literally, “Of the new things”—dedicated specifically to the Labour Question. This Letter laid the foundations for the Church’s so-called Social Doctrine. The text marked a turning point in the way charitable action was conceived of within the Church and also the Society. By analysing the situation at the time, it updated their attitudes towards the working class, because

the composition of societies and the problems faced by them at the end of the nineteenth century bore little resemblance to those of the eighteenth century, and serving the poor could no longer be understood or carried out in the same way.

The Society would retrospectively apply the term “social apostolate” to all of its work serving the poor after that emblematic date in 1891.³ “Apostolate” was derived from the understanding that this was one of the essential ways in which the Society’s mission was carried out, similar to the educational or intellectual apostolates. While “social” signalled the broadening of its objectives, from solely charitable acts towards individuals, to achieving social transformation that would guarantee a better life for marginalised and excluded people.

1.1 A Historical Overview

This text offers a historical overview of the evolution of the Society of Jesus’ social apostolate since 1891. It tries to offer a journey through the most significant events that occurred in this field from that date to the present. The route will encompass the wealth of accomplishments and the variety of responses the Society offered, each adapted to its specific context, each with its own issues.

This overview allows us to observe how the implementation of the social apostolate has been *in constant dialogue with history*. The various forms that the apostolate took can only be truly understood by considering them within their relevant time period. The initiatives undertaken gain meaning when examined within the particular historical situation experienced in each country. Therefore, in most chapters—where it was necessary—basic considerations

³ This is the assumption that Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ makes when he writes about the term “Apostolado Social” [Social apostolate] in *Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús*, Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, 2001. The present text adopts that same interpretation.

of the historical context have been included, thereby allowing us to situate the Society's response within its relevant setting.

In turn, this apostolate has been animated *by listening to the Spirit*. As can be seen throughout these pages, the social apostolate has shown abundant creativity in its achievements and has been characterised by audacity and generosity. Creativity, audacity and generosity are signs of the presence of the Spirit, and Jesuits and their collaborators in their mission have listened to it when making decisions. Without listening to the Spirit, a journey like this would have been unimaginable. Therefore, the last chapter tries to synthesise how Ignatian spirituality has been and continues to be the bedrock of this apostolate.

Engaging with the times and listening to the Spirit that inhabits them are the two essential beacons that have guided the course for the social apostolate until today. How the apostolate materialised and evolved in various moments can be explained through this double exercise that Jesuits have tirelessly carried out in each and every historical circumstance.

Likewise, the social apostolate can only be understood *within the ecclesial context*. The Society's response has gone hand in hand with the evolution of the Church's thought and its works in this field. From 1891 until today the Church has greatly broadened its reflection on social issues, to the point that the Social Doctrine of the Church is now a solidly rooted body of doctrine. The Social Doctrine has contributed to the development of social consciousness within the ecclesial community and has guided many of its achievements. For this reason, some chapters contain references to ecclesial reflections and interventions that became essential in the evolution of the Society.

The chapters are fundamentally descriptive and generally do not include the author's opinions. These are only found in the last section of each chapter, where a brief critical synthesis of the chapter's contents is made.

The main contribution of this volume is the overview it provides, because it encapsulates the entirety of the Society's social work in a few short chapters. The volume paints a general picture of this work, which otherwise is usually found in small and incomplete segments. Its greatest limitation is that many details have been left out, because the social achievements since 1891 have been enormous. In order to offset these absences to some extent, an effort has been made in the footnotes to indicate where supplementary information can be accessed. Likewise, the bibliography included at the end can serve as resource. In fact, the existing literature is very broad and diverse, due to the variety of languages and national origins, which makes it more dispersed and less accessible. In spite of the considerable amount of existing publications, further studies on specific aspects are still necessary. In any case, the desire for comprehensiveness goes far beyond the intentions of this text, which tries to offer a broad perspective while not neglecting to include all the information deemed necessary to understand the historical scope of the social apostolate. Some will feel that more detail should have been included in one aspect or other another, and they will not be without reason. The reader can judge at the end to what extent it has been possible to portray an informed, fair and balanced overview.

1.2 Contents of the Chapters

The chapters are divided into three parts. The first, entitled "The Way of Preparation", contains four chapters. It was considered essential to include an initial chapter on the life of Ignatius and his first companions. This is a historical reference point that acts as a gateway to a fuller understanding of how the social apostolate is fundamentally incorporated into the Ignatian tradition. Chapter 2 is dedicated to this tradition. It will attest to the social apostolate's lasting resonance in the history of the Society of Jesus since its inception. This is not a mission that suddenly

emerged out of nothing, at a particular moment, but one which is connected to the Society's tradition as a whole, originating from Ignatius and his companions and carried forward by later generations.

Chapter 3 deals with the initial response to the Labour Question. The Church, in its reactions and its responses, played a very important role in this issue. Being aware of the Church's positions is paramount to understanding how the Society behaved. Therefore, a large part of the chapter is dedicated to ecclesial reflections and attitudes. Nevertheless, the intense activity of some Jesuits in countries like France, Spain and Italy is also explored. They laid the foundations for subsequent achievements in social action.

Chapter 4 addresses the reaction of the Society to fascism. This reaction was not part of the social apostolate, in a strict sense, but they can be viewed as closely linked. Its inclusion allows for a deeper understanding of what fuelled Jesuit action in the social sphere. Jesuits, especially in Germany, took an active part in the opposition to the Nazi regime, with courageous statements and at the risk of their own lives, a cost some would eventually pay. Their prophetic voice rang out in defence of the values of freedom and human dignity. Reference is also made to the attitude of the Society towards fascism in Italy and to a lesser extent in Spain.

Chapter 5 examines the second response to the Labour Question, which involved what became known as the Workers' Mission: priests who, in solidarity with the workers and their causes, worked alongside them in factories. Jesuit workers who were involved played a key role in the development of the social apostolate through their reflections and convictions. The Workers' Mission overcame many difficulties and misunderstandings on the part of the hierarchy, and it was eventually accepted and recognised. Many of the insights gained there have gone on to enrich social action in the Society. The Workers' Mission marks the

crossroads where the end of the way of preparation meets the start of way of consolidation, where the second part begins.

The second part is entitled “Consolidation”, because after the long period of preparation outlined in the previous chapters, the Society as an organisation assumed responsibility for the implementation of the social apostolate. At the end of that period, the social dimension would cease to be the exclusive task of a few Jesuits and their works and became the responsibility of them all. This reached fruition in Fr. Arrupe’s era, specifically during General Congregation 32 in 1975. From then on, the Society’s mission would be formulated as “service of faith and promotion of justice”. This was not conceived as two juxtaposed and separate realities—on the one hand faith and on the other justice—but as two sides of a single mission that had to be pursued by all Jesuits simultaneously.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to the social centres, which are the institutions that develop the social apostolate, the institutional form of this apostolate. These centres sought to go beyond charitable action and tried to orient themselves towards structural transformation. Fr. General Janssens played a key role in their development by promoting the apostolate and the social centres in a determined way. His “Instruction on the Social Apostolate” (1949) was a crucial text for the evolution of the apostolate. Throughout the period before and after Janssens, many social centres were opened which today make up the institutional foundations of the social apostolate.

Chapter 7 focuses on the figure of Fr. Arrupe, who, as General, became fully involved in the promotion of the commitment to social concerns within the Society. In 1975, he convoked General Congregation 32 (GC 32), which, as has been said, would define the Society’s mission as “the service of faith and the promotion of justice”, a formulation that would be confirmed time and time again in subsequent decades. It was also Arrupe who, with the

support of that Congregation, turned the promotion of justice into a dimension which all the works of the Society had to incorporate, thus extending its scope beyond the confines of the social apostolate. From then on, the Society's tradition of serving the poor was definitively extended to the promotion of justice. With this, the Society's own awareness of the mission would slowly transform.

Chapter 8 concludes the second part, analysing the new perspectives on the mission that the following General Congregations—especially GC 34, 35 and 36—incorporated into the great insights from GC 32. The mission decrees from these Congregations are closely studied, analysing their contributions and the sensitivities on which their reflections were founded.

The third part is titled “Later Developments”, and mainly includes some of the most important achievements in the years following Arrupe. The different chapters address various aspects of how the social apostolate has been deployed in recent years.

Chapter 9 is devoted to education at the margins, which has been expressed in different forms in each continent. Above all other achievements “*Fe y Alegría*” [Faith and Joy], developed in Latin America, bears mentioning. Likewise, other initiatives are explored, such as those carried out in India or the United States. In this chapter—as was the case with the section on the response to fascism—one might question whether the field of education for the poor truly belongs in the social apostolate, or whether it is more at home in the educational field. In reality, education at the margins has a double soul: the first aspect being educational, and the other concerned with the service and promotion of education to the marginalised. The chapter addresses this second facet. In any case, it would be misleading for a volume such as this one, which claims to offer an overview of the social apostolate, to omit an accomplishment with as many social repercussions as education for the poor.

Chapter 10 deals with the topic of the insertion communities, in which many Jesuits tried to live alongside the poor, sharing their living conditions and becoming part of their communities. These experiences served to renew our conception of the meaning of community life.

Chapter 11 is dedicated to the Jesuit Refugee Service, founded in 1980 by Fr. Arrupe, shortly before he fell ill and was left unable to continue carrying out his duties as General. Since then, this work has spread across the various continents plagued by the tragedy of forced human displacement, trying to accompany, serve and advocate for refugees and internally displaced people.

Chapter 12 deals with a relatively new aspect: the ecological question. This is becoming ever more significant in light of scientific studies that show how human beings are causing nature's deterioration. Humanity is responsible for the degradation of the environment. The recent Encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015) by Pope Francis has helped to raise awareness within the Church about the importance of the ecological commitment. The chapter analyses its contents and shows the Society's initiatives in this field.

Chapter 13 focuses on networking, a necessary task to address today's great apostolic challenges which are manifestly global. They require international and intersectoral collaboration, an area which little by little is showing signs of progress and is showing some results. In this chapter we analyse some texts concerning networking and present some of the active networks.

Chapter 14 serves as a conclusion to the volume. It contains an exploration of how Ignatian spirituality penetrates all aspects of the social apostolate's great efforts to serve the poor and promote justice. The Ignatian roots of this apostolate are explored and some characteristics of Ignatian spirituality are signalled as bearing particular relevance for the social apostolate.

As it comes to its conclusion, this historical journey gives a sense of the magnitude of the efforts made in the social apostolate,

and therefore, the grace it received. Although there is some cause for concern, as the apostolate is still fragile and in need of support, this is far outweighed by reasons to be thankful and have hope. This apostolate has significantly transformed the Society, bringing it closer to the poor today and deepening its concern for building a more humane and just world. This volume wishes to be a simple tribute to all the people, Jesuits and collaborators, who have contributed to the growth of this apostolate, especially those who risked their lives, reputation or security to allow the 'least' in society to live a fuller life.

The Way of Preparation

The Industrial Revolution brought about a general transformation in the societies where it took hold. Along with great technical advances and strong economic development, it brought suffering to large masses of workers. They struggled to survive and defend their rights, and it would take many years to see the latter respected.

The Church recognised these exploited factory workers as the new poor. Their existence, living conditions and struggles came to be grouped under the term, the “Labour Question”. The Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) by Leo XIII dealt with this question. This document was the bedrock on which the Church founded its Social Doctrine. The text harvested the ecclesial experience gained in the service to the workers and projected its future work in this field.

Rerum Novarum also marked the beginning of the Society of Jesus’ social apostolate, although some of its ministries had already been moving in that direction. The social apostolate was the product of a long journey of preparation that preceded the Encyclical and continued in its aftermath, following the text’s guidelines over many decades. It was a time of learning and steady consolidation of social work, which sought to address collective situations and go beyond individual charitable acts. This led to a broadening of the understanding of Christian charity.

Social work was not separate from the Ignatian tradition, rather it was rooted in it. With this in mind, the first part opens

with a chapter focusing on the Ignatian tradition, to identify some essential features that can be traced back to the Society's founding moments which have given impetus to the social apostolate. Initiatives carried out with workers are also explored, both during *Rerum Novarum's* period of influence, and later, with the Workers' Mission. Midway through, a chapter exploring the Society's reaction towards fascism is included, as this was an ethical challenge to human dignity which can undoubtedly be considered an issue of social concern.

These were all steps on the path towards the subsequent consolidation of the social apostolate, which would come about under the stewardship of the Fr. Generals Janssens and Arrupe. This development will be addressed in the second part.

In Jesus' Way: The Ignatian Tradition

In St. Ignatius of Loyola, the Society has always had a point of reference on which to model itself. His life has come to be the Society's bedrock, because Ignatius' mystical experience was not just a gift that he personally received, but a grace of God received through him for the whole Society, past, present and future.¹ For the first Jesuits, understanding Ignatius' journey through life, more specifically "how the Lord led him from the beginning of his conversion",² equated to "truly found[ing] the Society".³ It is thanks to the insistence of the first companions—especially Fr. Nadal—that we have a personal story, dictated by Ignatius himself to Fr. Camara, who recorded it in the text that has survived to this day, the so-called *Autobiography*.⁴

This story, along with other parallel sources and the Spiritual Exercises, are the Ignatian texts that the Jesuits most rely on in

¹ In reality, it is a gift for the entire Church, particularly appreciated by the large Ignatian family which includes many lay people and communities, quite a few female religious congregations and the Society of Jesus itself.

² Nadal, *Preface to the Autobiography of St. Ignatius*, 2. TN: English translation of direct quotations in the *Autobiography of St. Ignatius* [*Autobiografía de S. Ignacio*] taken from C. Olin and F. O'Callaghan, *Autobiography of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, New York, Harper & Row, 1974.

³ Gonçalves da Câmara, *Preface to the Autobiography of St. Ignatius*, 1.

⁴ Actually, the original *Autobiography* as such was not published until 1904, by the editors of *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*. Previously, the life of St. Ignatius could be found in the *Vida de S. Ignacio*, which Francis Borgia officially tasked Fr. Ribadeneira to write.

their formation, that is, in the forging of their identity as companions of Jesus; hence its paramount importance is evident. Ignatius' spiritual journey through the places where God led him, along with the early years of the Society, were the critical period that moulded the Jesuit institutional culture from which the religious group's values were developed.

From the perspective of the social apostolate, it makes sense to look to Ignatius' story—and to some extent, to that of his first companions—to uncover the strong and ever-present tradition of solidarity with the poor.⁵ In this way, it becomes apparent that the apostolate did not emerge in modern times, suddenly and of its own accord; rather, it is firmly set within a long history of closeness, friendship and service to the 'least' in society. This story is its motivational source. Neither is the apostolate disconnected from the Ignatian tradition; the latter gave it its source, its meaning and its vigour. The social apostolate is, strictly speaking, an Ignatian apostolate.

This chapter first explores Ignatius' conversion, the moment when he made his option for austerity and poverty—which he made to resemble the saints—which brought him closer to the poorest people and brought him to live among them. Secondly, it examines what happened years later when he visited Azpeitia, his birthplace, in 1535. He only stayed there for three months, but there are many personal testimonies from that time that allow us to reconstruct Ignatius' apostolic way of life, his daily activities. During the visit, his utmost concern was to serve the marginalised and reconcile the estranged, which sheds light on how Ignatius led his apostolic life. Addressing the needs of the disadvantaged was essential to his way of being. Thirdly, the apostolic practices of the first generation are analysed, including the role that

⁵ A good text for this section is José M^a Rambla et al., *Tradicón ignaciana y solidaridad con los pobres*, Bilbao – Santander, Mensajero y Sal Terrae, 1991.

charitable works played and the manner in which they developed. This is followed by a summary of some of Ignatius' texts which offer a glimpse of what he understood as serving and being present among the poor. The chapter closes with some concluding notes on the Society that was forged after the first generation, which adopted poverty and service to the poorest of the poor as part of its apostolic life-style.

2.1 Ignatius' Conversion

After suffering severe wounds in the battle of Pamplona in 1521, Ignatius recuperated in his family home in Loyola, where he spent many idle hours. He asked his sister-in-law for some reading materials, who offered him the few books she had: a Life of Christ and a volume of the lives of the Saints.⁶ He would have preferred a chivalric romance—which was more to his taste—but there were none at home, so he settled for what was available. Absorbed by the stories of the saints' deeds in service to the Lord, he imagined living as they did. The saints awakened a burning desire in him to win God's favour through penance and poverty. Being intense by nature, he yearned to imitate their most ascetic endeavours. They also planted the seed of desire in him to live in absolute poverty.

All this led to him leaving Azpeitia, once recovered, and setting out for Barcelona, with the intention of undertaking a long pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He wanted to see the holy places of his Lord Jesus. On the way, in March 1522 before setting sail from Barcelona, he stopped at Montserrat. At this stage, Ignatius had made a definitive decision to change his life, although this path

⁶ The two books that Ignatius read were, the Life of Christ, a translation of *Vita Christi* written by Ludolph of Saxony († 1377) and in the case of the lives of saints, a translation of *Leyenda Aúrea* by Jacobo de Voragine († 1298). Cf. Ignacio Iparraguirre, Cándido de Dalmases and Manuel Ruiz Jurado, *Obras de San Ignacio de Loyola*, 5th ed., Madrid, BAC, 1991, p. 102.

would be tough and fraught with challenges. He wanted to live the life of a saint, dressed in “the same garb and uniform”⁷ as Christ. So, he bought some sackcloth, prickly and poorly woven, and fashioned a sort of robe from it that he would wear, complete with a staff and a gourd, in the style of a penitent pilgrim, on his journey to Jerusalem.⁸

On March 24th, having shed his clothes, he went in secret to a poor man and gave him his courtly attire. He put on his new smock and spent the night in the monastery of Montserrat praying before the Virgin, whose feast was to be celebrated the next day. In the morning he descended from the mountains and went to the neighbouring town of Manresa. There he was approached by people who asked him whether it was true that he had given his clothes to a poor man. As Ignatius himself recounted, “tears ran from [Ignatius’] eyes in compassion for the poor man to whom he had given his clothes—in compassion, for he realised they were threatening him, thinking he had stolen them.”⁹ This is the first time in Ignatius’ story that we see him cry, brought on by the harm done to a pauper. This was his first act of compassion. From that moment forth, his voluntary poverty brought him closer to the poor and made him sensitive to their plight.

During this first period, he lived the life of a beggar, carrying nothing with him. He begged from door to door and, when boarding the ship for Jerusalem, he battled with his conscience when he was ordered to take some “biscuit” with him, in order to gain passage.¹⁰ He consolidated his life-style of poverty, which would

⁷ TN: English translation of direct quotations from the *Constitutions* taken from John W. Padberg, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms. A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, St. Louis, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996, No. 101.

⁸ *Autobiography*, No. 16. In fact, he would not arrive in Jerusalem until a year and a half later, in September 1523.

⁹ *Autobiography*, No. 18.

¹⁰ *Autobiography*, No. 36.

become his way of life and service. He begged for alms to survive while tending to the needs of others from his own position of poverty. He shared everything with other marginalised people. Only in Paris, when he realised that he had to commit himself fully to his studies, would he seek to stabilise his economic situation, appealing to a benefactor which allowed him to live without the pressure of having to beg continuously.¹¹ In fact, this was at a much later date, in 1529, seven years after his arrival in Manresa.

His attitude towards excluded people can be best understood by looking at some examples. In 1524 at the Church in Ferrara, on his way back from Jerusalem, a poor man asked him for alms and Ignatius gave him a small coin. Then another man came, and he gave him a larger one. Upon seeing his generosity, they approached him again and again, and he gave away his coins, until he had none left. They kept coming, and he begged their forgiveness, as he “had nothing left”.¹² His generosity is striking. He was aware of his own need but put the needs of the poor first. He owned as little as they did, yet he gave away everything he had. He treated them with absolute reverence, with a grace otherwise reserved for people who commanded great respect.

For some authors,¹³ these episodes offer a glimpse into the nuances of Ignatius' spiritual experience. It was clear to Ignatius that Christ lived in conditions of poverty and that He identified with the least in society. Ignatius had read the parable about the final judgment from Matthew 25 many times over. This passage clearly states that what is done to the least person, so too is done to Christ. This was Ignatius' motivation to be a pilgrim,¹⁴ to live

¹¹ *Autobiography*, Nos. 73–76.

¹² *Autobiography*, No. 50.

¹³ Cf. José M^a Rambla, “El peregrino con los pobres”, in *Tradicón ignaciana y solidaridad con los pobres*, Bilbao – Santander, Mensajero y Sal Terrae, 1991, pp. 17–35.

¹⁴ This is how he refers to himself in *Autobiography*, as the “pilgrim” [original text: *peregrino*].

poorly as Christ did and to serve him by serving the poor, with whom he identified himself. He served the poor, appreciating their human dignity and taking responsibility for their hardships and misfortunes. He discovered in them the divine presence to which he decided to devote his life. It became clear to him that his poor companions shared a bond with the poor and humble Christ of the Gospel. Serving them was serving Christ Himself.

2.2 St. Ignatius' Trip to his Hometown Azpeitia

One remarkable period in Ignatius' life was the time he spent in his native town; this allows us to form an idea of how he carried out his apostolate and what his attitude towards the poor was. Many testimonies from that visit have been preserved to this day, thanks to the informative research carried out for his canonisation as a saint,¹⁵ and they give a vivid description of his day to day activities. Ignatius was in Azpeitia from April to July 1535, following his time in Paris.¹⁶ His health had deteriorated, and doctors recommended returning to the fresh air of his hometown to recuperate. At the same time, according to Ribadeneira, he had some business that he wanted to resolve to put his mind at ease. So, he set out on a little horse on the long journey back to his childhood home.

When he arrived, he did not go to his family home, as his brother had asked him to do, but instead he took up lodgings in the damp and squalid Magdalena hospital, still to this day on the outskirts of the town, on the banks of the Urola River; the furthest possible place from the Loyola family's ancestral home. The hospital was run as a charity hospice to receive beggars and sick people. He lived there until his departure. His brothers offered

¹⁵ Informative processes in Azpeitia in 1595, in *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu*, Series IV, volume II, 1918, pp. 167–253.

¹⁶ For this part, we mainly follow Juan María Pérez-Arregui, *San Ignacio en Azpeitia*, 3rd ed., Vitoria, Banco de Vitoria, 1991, pp. 108–166.

him a good bed to rest on, but he refused, sleeping on the hard ground, living in the hospital in the same conditions as the poor and needy. This was how he always travelled.

He wore humble garments, “so that his entire way of life was an expression of his poverty and humility.”¹⁷ He survived on the alms he received from begging from door to door. What he collected he took back to the Magdalena and shared out with his poor companions, sitting like a family around the same table.

Every day he taught catechism to the children, and many attended; in time even some adults would join. Occasionally, his brother Don Martín came to see him. He preached three times a week in the chapel of La Magdalena and in the parish on Sundays and feast days. Apparently, many people came to listen to him, not only from Azpeitia itself, but from the many valleys that surrounded the town.¹⁸ The famed holiness of the youngest Loyola rapidly spread.

He also spent time reconciling feuding or estranged people. He restored peace in marriages failing due to the infidelity of husbands. He reunited families in conflict. He spoke, persuaded and eventually convinced them. He acted as mediator in a long conflict between the Franciscan sisters and the local clergy of the parish of Azpeitia, which had begun at the beginning of the century and had been the cause of much unrest in the Urola valley. He managed to broker an agreement between the parties, and they signed and sealed a public deed in the presence of a notary, to give it added legal security. His signature appeared in the document as a witness: Íñigo.¹⁹

As his departure drew near, he wanted to consolidate all his relief efforts for the poor over the past months, so he founded two

¹⁷ This is one of the accounts collected, which can be found in *ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

institutions. The first involved his brother Don Martín, whom he requested to bring twelve loaves of bread to the parish every Sunday, to be distributed among the paupers “in homage to the twelve Apostles”. The second institution was more lasting in nature. Ignatius wanted the poor to have their needs adequately met, but at the same time he wanted to put an end to the abuse of unregulated begging, as it was wrongful that some people were living on alms when they could be providing for themselves through their own work. In this case he involved the town authorities who established a series of laws,²⁰ by which the municipality named two people each year—they would be called “*mayordomos*”,²¹ one member of the clergy and one lay person—who would collect alms for local poor on Sundays and feast days. These two people would be responsible for distributing the aid, assessing the person requesting it and their degree of need. At the same time, neighbours were asked not to give alms directly, but through these two people. Finally, begging from door to door was outlawed; instead beggars were to go to these two stewards, who would be responsible for ensuring the welfare of the paupers, in knowledge of their particular situation.

In this way, Ignatius did not settle for merely alleviating the needs of the poor but sought a lasting cure for their hardships and delegated the responsibility for the institution to others; a strategy that would be employed by Jesuits in the future. After leaving Azpeitia, he left his little carthorse in the hospital. It had travelled with him from Paris and his companions had bought it to lighten his load so that his precarious state of health would not deteriorate. They used it for years at the Hospital de la Magdalena to bring firewood to heat the residence. Even Francis Borgia would find it there in 1552; when he visited Ignatius’ family he also

²⁰ They are in the Notarial Archive of Azpeitia, *Registro de escrituras sueltas de San Juan de Aquemendi*, in *ibid.*, p. 153.

²¹ TN: stewards.

wanted to stay in the hospital, eat at the table with the poor and sleep where Ignatius slept. Those first companions all followed the same way of proceeding.

2.3 Social Action in the First Generation

Ignatius' way of life was adopted by the first companions, who dedicated themselves to performing merciful works from their residence in Venice in 1537. They devoted themselves to caring for the sick in hospitals, where syphilis was rampant, a disease that had erupted in Italy a few decades earlier and had caused great physical and moral suffering. They supported the Mounts of Piety, low interest lenders of Franciscan inspiration. They asked for money for the redemption of prisoners. They helped prostitutes and street children and visited prisons to accompany the inmates.²²

At that time in Italy there was an abundance of confraternities that sought to administer aid in the community. The philosophy of these groups provided the first companions from Paris with an example to follow when carrying out their charitable work. They were aware that Jesus was not only concerned with people's spiritual wellbeing, but also with their physical health. Therefore, their understanding of pastoral care included the care of people in hospitals and other charitable works. In their apostolic practice they combined preaching and the practice of mercy, understanding that both were simultaneously necessary. In addition, the scholastic philosophy they had studied prompted their commitment to the "common good", which encouraged them to particularly protect the weakest in society at that time.

They took direct responsibility for the needy, offering them company or providing financial support during times of famine,

²² This section follows John W. O'Malley, *Los primeros jesuitas*, Bilbao – Santander, Mensajero y Sal Terrae, 1995, in chapter 5, *Obras de misericordia*, pp. 207–248. Also see Michael Campbell-Johnston, entry "Apostolado social", in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*

floods or epidemics. During the cold winter of 1538-39, in Rome, they asked for alms for people living on the street, and provided food, clothing and shelter for months.²³

They usually went to institutions where poor people could be found: hospitals, prisons, orphanages or shelters. There they tended to their needs. This pastoral action was considered so vital that when the first companions were called on to defend their lack of communal prayer, they would claim that their service in hospitals was the main impediment to doing so.²⁴

Sometimes they created their own institutions to care for the needy. In these cases, the first companions worked with lay people and often entrusted the ongoing institutional management to them, in order to guarantee the institution's existence into the future. Nadal is recognised as the first organiser of social assistance in Sicily due to the work he did in the city between 1548 and 1553.²⁵

For Nadal, reconciliation of the estranged was the first and foremost ministry, and he used it as a starting point in his interpretation of the *Formula*,²⁶ in which this ministry is listed. He conceived of reconciliation as the lens through which all other pastoral activities should be viewed.²⁷ The Jesuits endeavoured, through dialogue and persuasion, to bring peace to situations plagued by murder and robbery, and to environments where there was a thirst for revenge.

²³ In George Schurhammer, *Francisco Xavier: su vida y su tiempo*, Bilbao, Mensajero, 1992, volume 1, pp. 579–580.

²⁴ Cf. André de Jaer, “Ignace de Loyola et le ministère des prêtres”, in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 109, 1987, 540–553, quoted by John O’Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

²⁵ John O’Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

²⁶ The *Formula* is a founding text of the Society of Jesus, approved by the Pope in the form of a bull, with the final draft in 1550: Bull *Exposit debitum* by Julius III, July 21st, 1550.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

Wherever they went, they would go to hospitals. They took care of the sick, which sometimes led to them becoming infected and falling ill. It is recorded that in the first 100 years after the death of Ignatius, 1,190 Jesuits died by contracting diseases from patients in their care, St. Luis Gonzaga being the most famous case, but by no means the only one. In the city of Naples, in 1656 alone, 60 Jesuits died after contracting the plague.²⁸ The ministry of care in hospitals waned as the number of schools grew.

The Jesuits visited inmates in prisons. They dedicated themselves to tending to the dying and those facing the death penalty during their last days. They were a comforting presence, staying by their side until the last moments, particularly for those facing execution.²⁹ It is worth noting that although the prison system had many deficits, prison reformation was not on their agenda.

They also worked to help prostitutes escape the afflictions of their social conditions.³⁰ Economic circumstances drove many into prostitution. Due to the spread of syphilis at the time, this came with the risk of illness and death. In 1543, Ignatius founded the *Casa Santa Marta* in Rome, for single or married women who were engaged in prostitution. This initiative would be followed by similar projects in cities such as Florence, Pisa, Padua, Bologna, Modena, Milan, Palermo, Valladolid... The Jesuits endeavoured to help these women change course and find an honourable way to earn a living. In general, this meant helping them seek a husband—the Jesuits would collect money for their dowry—or to enter religious life. The model developed at the *Santa Marta* was remarkably original and dedicated itself to rehabilitating the lives of those women, providing a permanent solution to their problems.

The Plague, famine and the growth of city populations also increased the number of street children in Italian cities. In 1541,

²⁸ *Synopsis historiae Societatis Jesu*, Louvain, 1950, column 751.

²⁹ John O'Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 223–231.

Ignatius founded the *Compañía de los Huérfanos* [Society of the Orphans], which took care of children in two separate locations. There were similar projects in Palermo, where Láinez engaged with a confraternity so that they would finance and manage the project. The same took place in Messina and Catania. In particular, the Jesuits cared for the children of prostitutes, particularly their daughters, by procuring a dowry that would allow them to marry. This allowed them to escape a vicious cycle that would channel them into the same occupation that had degraded the dignity of their mothers.

2.4 Poverty and Service to the Poor in Ignatius' Texts

The practice of merciful works was a product of the religious experience of Ignatius and the first Jesuits, but in turn, this practice would enrich their reflections and their own experience of God. One can find traces of this in the traditional Ignatian texts, which will be briefly reviewed in the following.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*³¹ (SE), poverty appears as one of Jesus' most distinctive traits. Ignatius invites us to contemplate the Child of Bethlehem who "is born in extreme poverty" (SE 116). He does not let the retreatant become spellbound by the nativity scene, the Holy Family, the shepherds and the angels, but opens their awareness to the fact that this little one would go through great tribulations, hunger and thirst, heat and cold, insults and abuse, to eventually die on the cross (SE 116). Jesus is described as a poor man suffering the same conditions as the poor throughout his life.

It is no surprise then that the petitions in the Exercises guide the retreatant to ask the Lord to allow them to live in the same

³¹ TN: English translation of direct quotations from the *Spiritual Exercises* taken from, *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*, trans. Louis J. Puhl, Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1986.

conditions of poverty. Following Jesus means adopting His way of life. In the oblation that concludes the Contemplation of the Kingdom, the retreatant offers to live in poverty, receiving injuries and abuse (SE 98), like Jesus and like the poor, who are regarded as nothing, the flesh of contempt.

In the Meditation on the Two Standards, Jesus intervenes, calling everyone to live like him, in spiritual and material poverty. This leads to humility, which is the virtue of the humble, who painfully learn this lesson by the abuse they suffer. Ignatius always sees poverty as a gift; he indicates that he wishes to live in poverty, but only “should the Divine Majesty be pleased thereby, and deign to choose and accept me” (SE 147). Living in the same conditions as Jesus is a blessing and a gift from God, not something that can be achieved by pure force of will.

In the meditation on the three forms of humility, the third form represents the zenith, as the retreatant must request, out of love, “poverty with Christ poor, rather than riches; insults with Christ loaded with them, rather than honours” (SE 167). The same ideas are repeated throughout, facilitating the retreatant’s progress in their experience and growth in their generosity: Jesus is poor, there can be nothing better than to live poverty like Him, but this is a gift that can only be granted by request, if Christ so wishes it.

It is not just about being like the poor in heart and in life, but also about serving the poor. In reforming one’s life, Ignatius asks retreatants to consider, among other things, how much of their household should be dispensed to the poor and works of charity (SE 189). Furthermore, he dedicates a chapter to outlining rules on how to distribute alms (SE 337-344).

There is one final part in the Exercises which underlines these caring and tender sentiments towards the poor. During the contemplation on the biblical scene when Christ casts the sellers from the temple, Ignatius details that “He overturned the tables and scattered the money of the wealthy money-changers who were in

the Temple”, while “to the poor venders of doves He said kindly, ‘Take these away! Make not the house of my Father a house of traffic’” (SE 277). He distinguishes the rich from the poor and treats them differently, since the former are there to enrich themselves and the latter to secure their day-to-day subsistence.

In short, there is a common link between the poor and humble condition of Jesus, the desire of the retreatant to live in poverty, like the Master, and the need to care for the poor.

If we look at the *Formula*,³² the essential text that expresses the identity and way of life of the Society, it speaks about a life of poverty and serving the poor. Jesuits take a vow of poverty because “From experience we have learned that a life removed as far as possible from all infection of avarice and as like as possible to evangelical poverty is more gratifying, more undefiled, and more suitable for the edification of our neighbours” (No. 3). And Jesuits must also be ready “to reconcile the estranged, compassionately assist and serve those who are in prisons or hospitals, and indeed to perform any other works of charity... altogether free of charge” (No. 1). That is to say, the Formula gathers together what the first Jesuits had already incorporated into their daily life. For them this was a charism received from God, which they captured in the Formula approved by the Pope and which would set the course for their way of life. This text has functioned to shape the identity of the Jesuits since the founding of the Society and confirms their vocation of poverty and service to the poor.

The *Constitutions* propose that novices undertake six main experiences, the second of them is serving in the hospitals for a month, “They should help and serve all, the sick and the well... so that in everything they may serve their Creator and Lord, crucified for them” (No. 66). Serving the sick is serving Christ, there

³² TN: English translation of direct quotations from the *Formula* taken from Padberg, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus... op. cit.*

is a mystical bond that unites Christ and the poor. Those who live in schools are asked to focus more on their deeds than on their words, and are thus requested to see to it that they help “the sick, especially in hospitals, through visits and sending persons to serve them; by the reconciliation of quarrelling parties; and likewise by doing what they can for the poor and for prisoners in the jails” (No. 650). In the *Constitutions*, poverty is portrayed as a mother (No. 287) who gives birth to a religious life, and as a rampart (No. 553) that protects our shared vocation.

Perhaps the Ignatian text that most completely reflects Ignatius' understanding of poverty and its relationship with the poor is the one known as the “*Letter of Poverty*”.³³ This sheds light on the mystical vision Ignatius has of the poor. His statements are challenging, but they are an expression of his life and faith. He says that the life of poverty is chosen out of love for the poor and humble Jesus Christ (No. 1). God loves this poverty, because the Son “chose to be born in poverty and to grow up in it. He loved it, not only in life, suffering hunger and thirst, without any place to lay His head, but even in death, wishing to be despoiled of everything, even His clothing, and to be in want of everything, even of water in His thirst” (No. 2). Those whom Jesus chose for friends, beginning with His “Mother and His apostles, and continuing on with so many Christians through the course of the centuries up to the present” were commonly poor (No. 2). Jesus Christ was sent to earth mainly for the good of the poor and “preferred [them] to the rich”: “the poor will be His counsellors. To such a degree has He exalted the state of poverty” (No. 2).

Ignatius sees the poor as the pathway to friendship with God: “Friendship with the poor makes us friends of the eternal King” (No. 3). He also recalls the words of the Gospel of Matthew, where

³³ Ignatius, *Carta a los padres y hermanos de Padua*, Rome 7th August 1547, in Ignacio Iparraguirre et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 817–821. TN: For an English Language version see *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. William J. Young, Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1959.

Christ identifies himself with the poor through his neediness: “as long as you did it one of these my least brethren, you did it to me” (Matt 25:40). Furthermore, poverty removes the obstacles to listening to the Spirit; it allows one to free and unhindered, because “the soul that is swept free of the love of earthly things shall in the same proportion be full of God, having received His gifts”, and it makes our prayers more effective, because the Lord hears the prayer of the poor (No. 3). Ignatius sings the virtues of poverty: “It is the mother, the nurse, the guardian of religion, since it conceives, nourishes, and preserves it; while, on the other hand, an abundance of temporal possessions weakens, corrupts, and ruins it” (No. 5). He also indicates that poverty, when loved and voluntarily accepted, provides unshakeable peace and lasting happiness (No. 6).

2.5 A Poor Society Serving the Poor

A brief assessment of the Society’s founding Ignatian tradition will serve to lay the groundwork for the following chapters. From the day of his conversion, Ignatius abandoned his position as a wealthy courtier and embraced poverty. He dressed like the poor and begged for a living, as they did. His first motivation was to imitate the saints, and he wanted to perform the same ascetic feats described in the accounts of their lives. However, his long hours of contemplation on the passages of the Gospel led him to meditate on Jesus Christ’s poor condition, above all other characteristics. Jesus was born poor, lived without a place to lay his head, died shamed and humiliated, as if he were the lowliest of all human beings. As his admiration and love for Jesus grew, Ignatius abandoned the desire to emulate the saints which had led him to live like those marginalised in society. Thereafter, he would assume poverty to better follow Jesus; he was in love with Him and wanted to share His life-style. No servant can be greater than their Lord. He would no longer try to imitate the saints’ deeds but love

the poor and humble Jesus of the Gospel. Love would lead him to become ever freer from attachment.

Ignatius came to love voluntary poverty. Over the course of his life he discovered its many virtues. It brought him closer to God, so he could also sing out: "Blessed are the poor in the Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:3). Poverty is a mother that gives birth to children of the Gospel: people who are grateful for everything because they take nothing for granted, nothing as their due; people who are free and unburdened, because they have nothing to defend; people who are close to the poor, God's chosen ones, sharing their conditions; people who resemble the beloved Christ, who chose to be poor. Poverty is also a rampart that fends off pride, the desire for a good name, enslavement to status, and the defence of one's property. It engages one's full potential for the cause of the Kingdom, while wealth paralyses it.

The ascetic commitment is always prone to cultivating narcissism. However, in Ignatius' case it brought him into contact with the marginalised in society. He lived with them, like them, under the same roof and sharing the same bread. He discovered his human dignity, which was why he took care of these people and treated them with kindness, helping them to grow in Christianity and escape their poverty. Throughout his life, he would help them wherever he encountered them. There was a mystical component to his service to the poor. Ignatius, who so greatly wished to serve the Lord, knew that this could be done by serving marginalised people, because Christ always saw himself in them. Serving them is serving Christ.

In this way, Ignatius understood that there is an inextricable link between the desire to live like the poor and serving them. These are two sides of the same coin, which are interdependent. They are two gateways leading to the love of the Poor Christ. There is no true poverty that turns its back on the poor. Nor can one lead an authentic life in favour of the poor while clinging onto wealth.

Although poverty chosen out of love can be liberating, poverty can also be an affliction that degrades human dignity. Ignatius fought against this, wherever he encountered it. He regularly and unfailingly served those who suffered, the least in society. This became one of the basic elements incorporated into the common practice of Ignatius' apostolate. The first companions and the infant Society inherited this essential approach. Likewise, they wanted to heal both body and soul, as their Master had done. Merciful works were part of the first Jesuits' way of proceeding: caring for the sick, teaching children, visiting prisoners, feeding the hungry, housing the destitute, reconciling the estranged.

Ignatius and the first Jesuits not only practiced forms of charity, but they also supported and created institutions that offered a stable service and sought definitive solutions to the people's problems. They were not satisfied with merely alleviating hardships; rather they sought to rehabilitate lives. When they founded institutions, they involved the local authorities, so that the latter would assume their responsibility. They also incorporated lay people from the beginning, sometimes entrusting them with the entire organisational management and upkeep.

At this foundational moment we can already observe, in an embryonic form, the social apostolate of the Society of Jesus. Generations of Jesuits have found inspiration in these sources, which is why over the centuries the service to the poor has taken on different forms within the Society, adapted to historical and geographical contexts. The evangelical impetus, the example of the first Jesuits, and the varied and practical ways in which this service materialised, have given rise to an internal culture that facilitates this work. Emblematic figures have come and gone, such as Pedro Claver and Luis Gonzaga, and accomplishments like the Paraguay Reductions, among others.

All of these prepared the way for the emergence of the social apostolate at the end of the nineteenth century, in a new context

which again required redefining responses. The speed of social change rendered old practices less relevant, in turn giving rise to innovation and redefinition.

The rapid overview of the essential elements of the Ignatian tradition in this chapter serves as an introduction to begin this journey through the social apostolate. This apostolate did not appear out of nothing, rather it linked in with and gave continuity to a long history of sympathy for the least in society, which has been present since the very outset of the Society. The social apostolate adapted these traditions to the new times in which it existed. The following chapter will now look at how this social apostolate came into being.



Faced with the Victims of Industrial Progress: The Challenge of Labour

As was mentioned in the introduction, 1891 is considered the social apostolate's founding year, following Leo XIII's Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* which paved the way for the Church's Social Doctrine. *Rerum Novarum*, or "of the new things", was published at the end of a century that had seen great change. In the social sphere this meant, among other things, the emergence of the Labour Question. European societies were in full transformation, in a process that shifted people, families and entire communities away from agricultural fields and into cities, to work in factories. This was where the deepest social change was taking place. Exploitation was causing great suffering among working families, who were increasingly organising themselves and defending their rights, aligning themselves ever more with a socialist ideology far removed from and at odds with the Church. The Church wanted to protect large groups of people from a ferocious capitalism that was taking advantage of them at will. At the same time, it realised that the faithful were deserting it, in a steady stream of believers.

Throughout the nineteenth century there were various ecclesial responses to the Labour Question. Many were individual initiatives, while others were more institutional and operated under the same principles. The Society also participated in this movement. The Jesuits identified the workers as the poor of the new

era, who they would serve. The Church—in its reflections and practices—had a profound influence on the Jesuits, while the Society's own perspectives and activities contributed to a mutually enriching relationship. This was a period of preparation for what would later materialise in the form of the social apostolate. Severely critical of socialism, but a child of the same time and born of the same sources, it would adopt a structural perspective that had not previously existed. In this vein, a preliminary change of direction began to take shape, features of which would become incorporated into new expressions of the practice of charitable works; resulting with, as time went by, what became known as the social apostolate.

The present chapter first analyses the historical context marked by the Industrial Revolution and by workers' movements. A large part is dedicated to the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, as it would be a key text in determining the ecclesial response in the following decades and a constant historical reference. The Holy Father drew on the input of several Jesuits when drafting it, so its relevance here is clear to be seen. Finally, Jesuit responses to the new and challenging question of labour, mainly in France, Spain and Italy, will be alluded to.

3.1 Two Revolutions that Break with History

The historical events in the eighteenth century led to a dual revolution that radically transformed societies, on a scale the world had not seen since the Neolithic Period.¹ In this revolutionary upheaval there was a shift in Western structures in politics, production and economics, the effects of which gradually and inexorably spread first across the West, and later across the whole world,

¹ For more details see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution. Europe 1789-1848*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010. This text is the background for these first paragraphs.

defying traditional orders and installing new forms of government and ways of generating wealth.

In 1789 the French Revolution began, overthrowing the absolutist state, removing the monarchy and the *Ancien Régime*, establishing the separation of powers, drafting the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen” and providing male citizens with equal rights and participation in electing their political representatives. French armies expanded the ideas of the Enlightenment across the European continent, trying to establish organised states in accordance with the revolutionary principles. Their superiority on the battlefield was manifest, thanks to Napoleon’s military intelligence and their enthusiasm in combat. In part, fertile ground lay before them, because during the Century of Enlightenment, the liberal ideas defended by the French troops had circulated among the intellectual elites of the continent. The thinkers whose ideas had fuelled the rise of the revolutionary movement were well known in the rest of Europe. The names of Diderot and D’Alambert, Rousseau, Montesquieu or Voltaire were commonly heard in salons around Europe frequented by educated people.

The reaction of the *Ancien Régime* was immediate and culminated with the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, against a coalition of Prussian, British and Dutch armies. This seemed to put an end to the changes in the organisation of state power, which returned to the hands of monarchies and aristocracies, supported by ordinary rural people who formed the bedrock of societies. However, the seed of liberal ideas had already been sown and was slowly emerging within European societies, giving way to a succession of revolutionary waves in the years 1820, 1830 and 1848, when they were temporarily victorious in France, throughout Italy, the German states, the Habsburg Empire and Switzerland and to a lesser extent Spain, Denmark, Romania, Greece and Great Britain. Over time, these consecutive revolutionary bursts were successful and modified the structure of Western states, so that today the political organisation

of countries can only be comprehended with reference to this seminal historical moment.

Parallel to this, quieter and more gradually but with equally transformational outcomes, a second revolution took place on the British Isles through the renewal of modes of production, known as the Industrial Revolution. It started on the one hand with technological innovations in the textile industry that allowed significant price reductions and massive sales which multiplied incomes. Early technical advancement was confined to small developments in a few workshops, in a country that was not yet distinguished for its knowledge of applied science. France had a greater scientific and technological capacity and its universities were far superior to their British counterparts. However, in the last decades of the eighteenth century in Great Britain, private profit and economic development had become the fundamental objectives of government policy and there was a favourable commercial climate, one not experienced on the continent. On the other hand, agricultural production was already mainly market-oriented and would go on to provide for a growing urban population. The new textile industry was based on cotton, which extensively used slave labour. Initially purchased in India and later in America, its supply would not have been possible without colonial expansion. At the same time, the government imposed high tariffs on Indian cotton fabrics, hitherto incomparably superior in quality and volume. India became deindustrialised and turned into a market for the sale of English products.

Therefore, favourable circumstances, possibly unique ones, existed in Great Britain to allow this Revolution to develop. This is the only way to explain the fact that between 1750 and 1770 the production of textile products increased by a factor of ten. They introduced their products in most countries, with the exception of China, which would not be incorporated into the British market until the opium wars of 1840. These culminated in a military triumph that opened up access to Chinese markets. The first industrialists

to gain access to this productive area amassed enormous fortunes. In the first decades, in Lancashire alone, producers increased their profits by factors of hundreds and thousands.

However, the revolution was traumatic, especially for people employed in workshops who endured terrible misery and discontent. Meanwhile, there were periodic and stark fluctuations in growth in the form of stock market crashes that were cyclical and were a chronic disease of the economy at the time. After the first decades of industrial development, profits started to decrease, with reduced investment opportunities and the sizeable margins of the past becoming unattainable.

If at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution the transformation in production was primarily in the textile industry, later the huge economic surpluses generated would lead capital to search for new areas of investment. Coal production would present the first opportunity, and extraction multiplied. By 1800, Great Britain was producing 90% of the world's coal. For many decades, there was little technical advancement in mining, with only minor improvements from traditional methods. Coal would allow the expansion of the steam engine, the development of the steel industry and finally the arrival of the train. The train would in turn transform the speed of access to markets and became a symbol of the new era of progress. It was not the most lucrative business venture, as few railways generated profits, but it embodied the promising dreams of the bourgeoisie. The railway allowed a glimpse of a future of success based on the application of science and technology to new methods of production. Its achievements would be vast, allowing communication at speeds never seen before and soon reaching an advanced level of technical maturity.

By then, some realities of the Industrial Revolution had been cemented in place: the existence of a bourgeoisie with a strong investment capacity, the incorporation of technology for the reduction of costs, the exploitation of a surplus working class that

received poverty wages,² and the growth of international markets for the sale of products in the context of the scramble for colonial expansion.

The Industrial Revolution, growing in the British cultural milieu, the only one where it could take root until then, was extended to the rest of the continent, so that all Western nations gradually developed their industrial production capacities and economic growth became ever more a priority of state policy.³ If the Napoleonic armies brought the ideas of the Enlightenment to all corners of Europe, it was the British expansion of the market that drove European nations to compete in industrial production and technological innovation. Both efforts constituted the two revolutions that have transformed our world ever since.

3.2 The Workers' Situation

The Industrial Revolution required a vast low-wage workforce to reduce production costs. By the eighteenth century in Great Britain land had been concentrated in the hands of a few landowning families and an agrarian bourgeoisie, who employed dispossessed workers. By introducing some technical improvements to a world that had scarcely changed since the Middle Ages, they were able to generate significant surpluses that would supply the food required for an expanding and increasingly urban population. A great number of people and families migrated from midland regions—later from Ireland, driven by famine—providing a labour force to make industrialisation possible. In 1850, Britain became the first country in history where the urban population surpassed the rural population.

² Hobsbawm goes so far as to say that the hunger of the workers was the trade-off for the accumulation of capital.

³ From the United Kingdom the Industrial Revolution was spreading to the continent through France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Spain and northern Italy. Outside of Europe, it also reached the United States.

The Napoleonic Wars required increased enlistment of soldiers and the armies contracted many traditional tradespeople for the war effort. When peace was achieved and industrial production advanced through the use of machinery and the use of iron, many skilled workers, who until then had been the most technically gifted, were left without work and facing desperate situations. They had to bow to the businessmen's will and definitively leave their freedom by the wayside.

Consequently, there was a glut of labour, both caused by the surplus population in the countryside, and the recurrent recessions that forced workers into unemployment. Large swathes of the population lingered around cities and factories, making up a poor underclass willing to accept meagre wages in return for employment. When they were employed, they lacked the legal resources to stand up to the businessmen and their only protection was a fledgling and toothless social legislation. This was what gave rise to an ever-growing impoverished, segregated and hungry population, especially in Great Britain.

Most workers in factories were exploited by a minority of producers who kept their employees' salaries to a subsistence level, so as to hoard profits for enormous personal enrichment and to allow them to finance the process of industrialisation. The workers faced very harsh living conditions, and few could resist the temptation to protest, which was why employers preferred children and women, who were employed for 12, 14 or even 17 hour working days. In some places, the youngest workers could be six years old. Tasks were repetitive, machine operated, and did not contribute in any meaningful way to one's personal growth. There were cases of infanticide, increased prostitution, alcohol consumption, suicide and mental illness. Salaries were too low to provide for a family, but they were dictated by competitiveness, which drove them downwards due to the abundance of idle workers. There was persistent overcrowding and undernourishment. Life expectancy in Manchester and Liverpool in 1840 was

half that of rural areas. There was a drastic social segregation due to the growth of inequality, in which a small minority enriched themselves while the vast majority suffered in hardship. Only the desperate went to work under such conditions. Stories from different countries recount similarly awful working conditions in the early stages of industrialisation.

The workers' movement offered an answer to the sufferings of this exploited population in the factories. It came together as one movement because specific protests that led to a few improvements proved insufficient, so they developed an organised, active and continuous monitoring mechanism to confront the "oppressors". They used methods of agitation and the media. The movement was not competitive, but cooperative; collectivist and not individualist; hence it being termed socialist.

Class consciousness came to the fore once again. This occurred in Great Britain and in France between 1815-1848. On the rest of the European continent it would remain a fledgling concept, which only took root as the process of industrialisation advanced. The word "socialism" was used for the first time in French and English intellectual circles in the 1820s. It would be immediately adopted in Britain and more slowly in France. Workers created mutual aid groups and unions to strengthen their internal organisation, and they wielded the weapons of strike and collective action to defend themselves from external threat. The radical and combative nature of French Revolutionary Jacobinism would furnish workers' movements with much needed solidarity and loyalty, as well as the ability to resist in the struggle. Solidarity would be their greatest strength. The workers' movement would offer a way of life to these people, giving meaning to their struggle, something the industrial and liberal bourgeois society was unable to guarantee.

Different forms of workers' defence initiatives emerged that would later be called "utopian socialisms" by Engels. Among

their proponents were figures such as Henry de Saint-Simon who sought to improve the physical and moral condition of the poorest and most populous classes. His followers would promote collective ownership. Another was Robert Owen, who since 1815 favoured cooperatives as an alternative to capitalist owned industry. Picqueur and Louis Blanc envisioned a regulatory role for the state capable of organising work. Fourier believed that a just society was possible through the foundation of rural cooperative communities—which he would call *phalanstères*—where the profits were distributed fairly among workers and businessmen who contributed their capital. Proudhon would be known for his claim that “property is theft”, while distrusting parliamentary democracy and the state. He had faith in individual freedom and in the organisation of the working class, especially its solidarity. This would go on to inspire both Marxism and anarchism.

Between 1837 and 1848 Chartism emerged, a British political movement that sought to achieve political power—or at least participation—for the workers through the People’s Charter of 1837, to enshrine guarantees for workers in the legal system. They demanded universal male suffrage and conditions to allow workers to be part of Parliament.

However, only with the birth of Marxist socialism would the potential of the workers’ movement be transformed into an organisation capable of establishing its own objectives and readying the means to achieve them. The publication of the Communist Manifesto in 1848 propagated the criticism of the capitalist economy, class struggle as a way of interpreting history, and the socialist regime as a future form of a human society free from capitalist oppression. By then, industrial society had spread far and wide, bringing further suffering to workers, while sparking their reaction and gradual organisation. Marx viewed social structures as the ultimate cause of widespread suffering. He considered economic conditions as the determining factor in the evolution of history. Those who own the means of production exploit those who don’t.

Marx's writings describe two revolutionary strategies⁴: the first considered that industrialisation itself generated consciousness among the working class, which would then take power by democratic means. The proletariat had to push for bourgeois reform, but without losing its freedom. This would be the line adopted by Marxist-Socialist parties until the First World War. The second was aimed at countries where workers were in the minority, as was the case in Germany. In this case, the proletariat had to become a conscious vanguard, which would seize the initiative for political and economic transformation. Here the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat emerges. This was the line adopted by Lenin.

After the breakthrough of Marxist doctrine, workers' struggles proliferated. They became international, forming a movement that diversified into a range of tendencies throughout its historical evolution—anarchists, trade unionists, socialists, communists. They all sought the transformation of capitalist society through social and political struggle and the formation of political vanguards to pursue these aims. The First (1864), Second (1889) and Third (1919) Internationals encouraged societal forces to carry out subversive action, as well as the forming of “workers” political parties, led by intellectuals and aimed at dismantling the existing political and social order.

3.3 Initial Reactions by the Church

Throughout the nineteenth century the Church would combat the emerging liberalism in the aftermath of the French and Industrial Revolutions. Firstly, it confronted the ideology on the basis that it had overthrown the old regime, delegitimised the sources of authority, and established a principle of individual freedom that

⁴ See Ildefonso Camacho, *Doctrina social de la Iglesia. Una aproximación histórica*, Madrid, Ediciones Paulinas, 1991, p. 56.

simultaneously challenged the Church's own hierarchical structure. Secondly, the Church felt side lined by the liberal demand that religion be confined to the private sphere, stripping it of its public relevance. Thirdly, because of its supranational structure, it felt embattled by the rise of an international labour structure.⁵ The Holy See outlined its opposition by publishing a document in 1864, during the papacy of Pius IX, called the *Syllabus*, that detailed 80 propositions that the Church felt obliged to condemn, rejecting even the possibility of the Pope coming "to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilisation."⁶

But this general attitude did not prevent many people and sectors of the Church from perceiving the widespread suffering of the working class and reacting to it. The Catholic community first responded through intense charitable activity. Many local works emerged to alleviate the living conditions of those people, such as support for the destitute, healthcare services, schools or residences. Some took on an international dimension such as the work of St. John Bosco or the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.⁷

There was also a strong condemnation of the economic model that was subjecting people to exploitation. The priest Félicité de la Mennais would say that modern politics sees the poor as nothing more than a machine, from which to extract the maximum gain in the shortest possible time. He would point out that the Labour Question not only had political consequences, but consequences of life and death for the human race. In 1834 Federico Ozanam, founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, published three volumes on "Christian Political Economy", offering a complete picture of the working situation. Philippe Buchez, a Catholic,

⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 56–57.

⁶ H. Denzinger, A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitio- num et declarationum of rebus fidei et morum*, Herder 1965²³, 2980.

⁷ This section follows Paul Droulers, "Il Cattolicesimo e la questione sociale contemporanea", in *Cattolicesimo sociale nei secoli XIX e XX*, Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1982, pp. 405–432.

would promote a modernisation of society based on workers associations and the founding of Christian cooperatives.

Also, the bishops of the main industrial dioceses in *France* drafted Pastoral Letters condemning the unjust misery suffered by the proletariat. Belmas, of the Diocese of Cambrai (1837), condemned the greed of businessmen who forced employees to work on feast days; their thirst for wealth impoverished workers, who were paid a salary likened to “a mere drop of their abundant sweat.” Cardinal Giraud (1845) took aim at the “exploitation of one man by another, who takes advantage of him as if he were a beast or a pure and simple instrument of production.” In the 1840s in Lyon, the Cardinal of Bonald recalled that for the Christian, “the working person is very different from a machine” and that the enrichment of businessmen could be viewed as a “usurpation” at the expense of the worker. In 1843 the archbishop of Paris, Monsignor Affre criticised the liberal economic system, as a science that only calculated increases in production, disregarded human beings and ignored the intrinsic dignity of the human person.

In *Germany*, where industrialisation arrived a little later than in France, even stronger statements were issued. Several voices demanded a return to corporate organisation and the introduction of labour legislation to defend the workers. Catholic Corporatism sought to form associations of producers of a given sector, equivalent to medieval guilds,⁸ to defend rights and offer mutual economic and moral support. Franz Joseph Ritter von Buss, a lawyer and Catholic politician, addressed the Parliament of Baden in 1837, describing the issues for workers at the time, in a discourse that is considered to be the origin of the Catholic Social Movement. Beginning in 1845, Kolping, a priest, founded a large association of young artisans—*Gesellenverein*—and later another for land workers.

⁸ The Church lamented the loss of the medieval guilds, to which it attributed a good part of the workers’ suffering, and which had been part of the makeup of the *Ancien Régime* which the guilds still defended.

Emmanuele von Ketteler, appointed bishop of Mainz in 1850, dedicated his exhortations to social problems from the beginning of his episcopacy, while simultaneously attacking socialism. Shortly before, in 1848, he had given a series of well-received sermons, in the same cathedral in Mainz, which described the initial elements of Catholic Social Doctrine.⁹ He distanced himself from liberalism, positing that ownership had a social function; and also from socialism, signalling the danger of excessive state power. He argued, in contrast to liberalism and socialism, that social problems are of a moral and religious nature. After 1863 he drew up a Christian social policy program. He would be a source of inspiration for Leo XIII when writing the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. In 1864 he published a short text on the Labour Question and Christianity, which received strong international recognition. In 1869 he went on to draft a framework for social legislation. Ketteler's example inspired major Christian social action in Germany. A miner, August Brust, and a metalworker, Weber, founded Catholic unions in 1895.

Belgium, which was early to industrialise, was home to many authors critical of working conditions. From 1834, Catholic workers' groups emerged which, despite being paternalistic in nature, would sow the seeds for future corporations and Christian democratic movements.

In *Austria* it was Vogelsang, a journalist, politician and lay Catholic reformer, who supported a broad movement to rebuild society around corporations that would combat liberal individualism and seek to build a partnership between capital and labour.

In *England* it was Cardinal Manning who defended workers of Irish origin, advocating for stronger legal regulation in his speech in Leeds in 1874. In the *United States* in 1887-88, in the presence of the Pope, Cardinal Gibbons supported the Knights of Labor

⁹ Juan N. García Nieto, *El sindicalismo cristiano en España. Notas sobre su origen y evolución hasta 1936*, Bilbao, 1969, pp. 10–11.

association, arguing that he did not want workers to abandon the Church as they had in France.

In *Spain*¹⁰ between 1841 and 1848, the priest philosopher Balmes published on the situation facing workers both in Europe and Catalonia. Another figure was Vázquez de Mella, a thinker who published many articles on the social question prior to *Rerum Novarum* (1891). He promoted corporations (1908) pointing out that they were oriented towards the social good, compared to associations which were only concerned with individual welfare. He supported trade unionism as a form of corporation which generates moral unity, combatting revolutionary unionism. Severino Aznar was another supporter of Christian trade unionism in Spain, at a conference in Orihuela in 1920, and strongly opposed socialism based on class struggle and hatred of the employer. There were also men of action, such as Fr. Vicent SJ, the Marquis of Comillas, Fr. Sisinio Nevares SJ, Fr. Palau SJ, and others.

In *Italy* industrial development was slower to take off and the hardship suffered by the proletariat was somewhat less harsh. Among the first proponents of the Catholic social movement were the writers at *Civiltà Cattolica*. Fr. Taparelli SJ asserted that economics is a moral science and that, when this is forgotten, the only purpose of economic activity becomes unlimited enrichment, with human beings at the service of these ends. In 1847, Monsignor Charvaz, bishop of Pinerolo, denounced in a Lenten pastoral letter “this new form of slavery” introduced by modern industry, “the thirst for enrichment in the shortest time possible” and the brutalisation and degradation of the human being. In 1845, Monsignor Rendu, bishop of Annecy, addressed a private letter to King Carlos Alberto de Saboya which was the first episcopal document to assert the state’s obligation to legally intervene in the name of justice, by creating institutions of regulation and control; this was necessary for the common good. The *Opera dei*

¹⁰ More information can be found in García Nieto, *op. cit.*, pp. 53ff.

Congressi—founded in 1874 to defend the rights of the Holy See and the religious and social interests of Italians—would change its focus from charitable action to social action.

However, before 1900 in Italy there had not been any initiatives to support trade unionism, only societies of mutual aid and mixed corporations of workers and businessmen, promoted as being in line with Catholic principles. Only from this moment on would there be a move to form Catholic unions, to compete with those of socialist leanings. Catholics were concerned with social issues and their most important projects would be forming cooperatives and credit organisations.¹¹

3.4 *Rerum Novarum*, the Birth of Church's Social Doctrine

In 1891 Pope Leo XIII published his Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* (RN), on the situation of the workers, as was indicated in its title. It was the first official document from a Pope to address the problems arising from industrialisation. It is also recognised as the text that paved the way for the Social Doctrine of the Church, setting in motion a range of declarations and encyclicals by later Pontiffs, up to the present day. Its importance was key to involving the Church in a more determined manner in defending workers. Many of the initiatives that took place in following decades could not have happened, nor can they be understood, without accounting for the impetus given by this Letter, hence why it is of key interest.¹²

RN considers *the workers as the new poor*, dispossessed by the Industrial Revolution. It wants to provide for their wellbeing, because “by degrees it has come to pass that working men have

¹¹ Cf. Antonius Toldo, *Il sindacalismo in Italia*, 2nd ed., Milan, Centro Studi Sociali, 1953, pp. 35–66.

¹² Ildefonso Camacho's text is closely followed here, *op. cit.*, ch. 3: “León XIII y la cuestión social: la *Rerum Novarum*”, pp. 61–88.

been surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hard heartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition” (RN 3).¹³ Profiteering and the monopolisation of power in employment and commercial dealings by a small minority, has meant that “a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the labouring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself” (RN 3).

In relation to socialism, RN identifies it as a root cause of these evils, as it promotes the struggle between workers and businessmen and encourages “the poor man’s envy of the rich” (RN 4). It specifies that the socialist intention to abolish private property and transfer private assets into common ownership to be governed by civil authorities constitutes a huge danger to the existing order and to the workers themselves. For this reason, part of the Letter is dedicated to making the case for private property, as will be shown in the following.

It also criticises the socialist intention to reduce “civil society to one dead level” (RN 17), because this is “striving against nature”. It considers that difference in talent leads to diversity of fortunes. Thus, the task is to alleviate suffering, while accepting differences.

Leo XIII’s aspiration is one of social harmony without confrontation, which is why he focuses his attention on socialism, viewing it as a force that promotes conflict and subversion which produces nothing but grave ills. He believes that the social classes must come to a harmonious agreement: “Each needs the other: capital cannot do without labour, nor labour without capital. Mutual agreement results in the beauty of good order, while perpetual conflict necessarily produces confusion and savage barbarity” (RN 19).

¹³ TN: The paragraph numbers for this encyclical are those of the English translation as it appears in http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html, visited in March 2019.

As for private property, the Letter affirms that property is a right, to which all people should have access. At the same time, it discusses the duties attached to the possession of goods. “Man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need” (RN 22, quoting St. Thomas Aquinas). Therefore, the purpose of private property is to benefit others, not to be enjoyed exclusively. It entrusts the state with the responsibility for safeguarding private property, in such a way that all social groups have access to it. That is to say, in his consideration of private property, the Pope is fundamentally trying to ensure that workers and peasants can become owners and not, on the contrary, be dispossessed, with their goods passing into the hands of the state.

Regarding the rights of the worker, the Letter defends the payment of a fair wage to cover one’s basic needs (RN 43), as opposed to the widespread practice where employers, using their negotiating power, imposed poverty wages on workers. Freedom of contract should not be free in appearance only (RN 44). When this occurs, workers are subject to violence by the hand of the powerful.

The Letter demands that work cease on Sundays and feast days (RN 41), that there be a balance between work and rest time, and particular attention be given to the working conditions of women and children (RN 42).

In relation to labour associations, there is nostalgia for the old guild system. The current situation of the workers is attributed to the disappearance of “ancient workingmen’s guilds [which] were abolished in the last century” (RN 3), because these associations provided protection to the workers. It affirms that “excellent results were brought about by the artificers’ guilds of olden times” (RN 49). Therefore, it considers freedom of association as a right (RN 51).

It praises mutual aid societies, and all other possible forms of protection for children, the elderly, women and workers. But

it still states a preference for workers' associations in line with the ancient guilds. It is content that "there are actually in existence not a few associations of this nature, consisting either of workmen alone, or of workmen and employers together, but it [is] greatly to be desired that they should become more numerous and more efficient" (RN 49). It is disposed towards mixed associations containing workers and employers, as it considers this as a good way to counteract class struggle.

A strong case is made for society to be organised around associations, as "confraternities, societies, and religious orders" have always given great benefits to humanity (RN 53). Overall, the impression remains that the worker is considered more so a beneficiary of charitable action rather than a true actor who achieves justice through their struggle.

It also discusses the *role of the state*. In contrast to liberalism, which advocates for minimal state involvement solely to guarantee the conditions of free trade, the Letter demands state action on a number of fronts. It must protect the rights of all, but especially the most vulnerable (RN 37); it must safeguard private property (RN 38); work to avoid strikes (RN 39); ensure the material and spiritual wellbeing of the workers; and seek justice in the terms of employment (RN 40-42). In contrast to the socialist state, it considers it unlawful to interfere in matters of private jurisdiction. In this way it underlines the value of guaranteeing the universal right to private property.

Regarding the status and the role of the Church, the Letter views it as the body whose guidelines states, employers and workers must follow. It is imperative for the Church to have an educational purpose, teaching the Catholic principles of love while giving people the opportunity to embrace them. In addition, the Christian community must organise for the benefit of the proletariat, through the practice of charity. The Church invites harmony and friendship between social classes, which will be the product of brotherly love (RN 25).

On the whole, one could say that RN seeks to defend workers from their everyday suffering at the exploitative hands of their employers. They are considered to be the new poor that has emerged from changing historical circumstances. The Letter's aspiration is for a society organised around associations, preferably with workers and employers in unison, which is in part why it continues to yearn for a return to a pre-industrial society. Finally, in contrast to the dialectics and confrontational nature of socialist movements, it believes in the fruitfulness of social harmony.

The reception of this Encyclical gave rise to a large number of initiatives in different countries. It provided a doctrinal basis for the development of works benefitting the labouring classes and informed how the Church engaged in the industrial sphere. From the point of view of the Society of Jesus, the Encyclical Letter was the origin of what would come to be known as the social apostolate. That being said, just as the forerunners to RN created the conditions to make the Letter possible and gave it its meaning, so too the social apostolate had historical precedents that are discussed in the following.

3.5 The Society's Response

The Jesuits experienced the situation described in the above and witnessed the industrialisation process and the sufferings of the working class. They were also caught up in the upheaval which saw the Catholic Church becoming side lined by a liberal ideology that pushed it out of the public sphere. As a result, it was losing the social relevance enjoyed until then. The unification of Italy would lead to the loss of the Vatican States—Rome fell in 1870—and the papacy was confined to a small country, the Vatican, and would never regain the splendour and international influence that it had once enjoyed. All this gave the sense of a Church in retreat, besieged by the new ideologies that were taking root; while, as the nineteenth century progressed, the dream of a return

to the regimes of old, once hoped for in the aftermath of the defeat of the Napoleonic troops, was becoming ever more distant.

To understand the Society's response to the workers' situation during these years, it is essential to take account of the civil and ecclesial historical setting, to which the previous pages have alluded. This will provide a deeper comprehension of the context in which the budding social apostolate developed.

It should be noted that the first General Congregation following the publication of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*—the 24th (1892), in which Fr. Luis Martín was elected General Superior—wanted to promote the impetus of Pope Leo XIII among Jesuits. Decree 20 strongly recommended the creation and support of associations—especially groups of workers—to encourage their education and development. The request was made to the Fr. General to facilitate the spiritual care of the workers and the poor and to provide Spiritual Exercises to them to help them grow in piety and charity. It also warned Jesuits not to become involved in economic or political matters.¹⁴

The following are some of the most notable Jesuit activities around the time of the publication of *Rerum Novarum* (1891), which give a sense of the context in which the social apostolate took root.

In France, Fr. Desbuquois SJ (1869-1959) bears particular mention; he was born in Roubaix, an industrial city in the North whose population increased fifteenfold during the nineteenth century, becoming an international metropolis known for its production of wool and cotton.¹⁵ The workers languished in a situation

¹⁴ John W Padberg, Martin D. O'Keefe and John L. McCarthy, *For Matters of Greater Moment. The First Thirty Jesuit General Congregations*, Saint Louis, Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994, p. 487.

¹⁵ See *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*, entry "Desbuquois". This is also based on Paul Droulers, "Un apostolo dell'azione sociale. Padre Desbuquois e 'l'action populaire'", in *Cattolicesimo sociale nei secoli XIX e XX*, Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1982, pp. 361–370.

of poverty little better than destitution, and they strayed from the Church, swelling the ranks of socialism. From his early years, Fr. Desbuquois was troubled by this and he later incorporated these sentiments into his vocation as a Jesuit. He initially collaborated with Fr. Leroy SJ, twenty years older than him, who shared his concern for the working class and his disquiet at seeing how the workers were losing their faith, a phenomenon exacerbated by the government's restrictions on the Church. The laws of 1901 that permitted freedom of association—except for religious congregations—together with the impetus of Leo XIII's RN, stirred these men to contribute to the formation of workingmen's groups which stood united in the defence of human dignity, both on a material and spiritual level.

These two Jesuits set up in Reims where they lived in a simple house that brought them closer to the living conditions of the working class they wished to serve. In January of 1903 the first copy of the magazine *Action Populaire* appeared, and it was slowly followed by many other editions characterised by their clarity, precision and practical spirit, which made them popular among Social Catholics.¹⁶ They gave people of action specific ideas and suggestions easily applicable to working-class environments. In time, two or three magazines were released each month, totalling over 300 editions over the years. Ever more publications were launched: *Revue de l'Action populaire*, a magazine that followed current social affairs and *Actes Sociaux*, a digest of pontifical documents, to name a few. In 1909 they launched *Mouvement Social*, a magazine which kept up the work of the Worker Circles, an initiative by La Tour du Pin. They prepared an annual social handbook—*Guide Social*—which detailed the development of key concerns and the activities of institutions.

¹⁶ The term "Social Catholicism" is terminology commonly used in French historiography, to refer to a Catholic movement that included both social thought and, moreover, a set of practical initiatives, from the Workers Circles to Trade Unions.

With all these publications they sought to communicate, in a clear, firm, precise and practical way, the Church's Social Doctrine to the clergy and lay people, which up to that point had been compiled in RN. They tried to engage Catholics, so that they would respond by working for fairer social structures. They reported on the work of country houses, trade unions, gardeners, workers hostels, credit institutions, as well as the importance of social education for women, professional hygiene, holidays and rest days, and the work of Social Catholics. Articles were often written by those carrying out the works, which allowed them to broadcast the possibilities of the ever-growing Social Catholicism to an enormous audience.

Fr. Desbuquois primarily wanted to engage with the clergy. He ramped up his visits, retreats and letters, over 2,000 a year, in collaboration with a remarkable group of associates. He organised sessions on social issues in the dioceses, as well as trade union events and events for women, already foreseeing the importance that women would have in the world of work. His aim was not to create alternative associations, rather to help grow existing ones and contribute to the formation of new ones.

He was a Jesuit who always sought to maintain independence from political movements, such as the Christian Democrats or those of socialist tendencies. He spoke in favour of trade unions composed solely of workers or employees, rather than mixed ones involving businessmen. He believed that only the former offered a response to workers' psychological and social needs, and that agreements could be reached between separate, autonomous organisations of workers and employers.

Although, during World War I, Fr. Desbuquois and other Social Catholics came under much criticism, subsequent Pontiffs—Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI, Pius XII—sent him letters of encouragement in his work, acknowledging his efforts. He never fell afoul of ecclesial censors. Fr. Leroy died in 1917 and after

the war *Action Populaire* reappeared, supported by Fr. General Ledokowski. Desbuquois then moved to Paris. He continued publishing with *Dossiers de l'Action Populaire*, which included studies and reports on social, national and international issues. Later, *Cahiers d'Action religieuse et sociale* (1933) would be added, a handbook dedicated to direct social action and the training of activists. Catholic businessmen would also come to them, eager to learn about the Social Doctrine of the Church and integrate it into their ventures.

The team had to adapt to more specialised demands, such as economic and financial, agricultural, family, trade union or employer related issues. The Society itself made an effort to send young Jesuits involved in these projects to receive training in Political Science or Law Schools.

As time went on, they continued to respond to training requests for activists. They would add their own commentaries to the Encyclicals *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) and *Divini Redemptoris* (1937). In 1927 the *International Labour Organisation* requested that a member of *Action Populaire* be incorporated into its structures to maintain their relationships with Catholic organisations, a position that stood the test of time and remains to this day.

Desbuquois would also focus on international issues. He reported on the situation in various countries and when nationalism came to the fore in the 30s, he gave insight into the social and political conditions in various parts of the world, reflecting on ways to contribute to the creation of international institutions based on Christian law and morals.

The Second World War brought fresh disruption to his work. Fr. Desbuquois was relieved from his position as director of *Action Populaire* in 1946, at 77 years of age, though he would continue to live on for many more years. In France, he passed on the tradition of communicating the Social Doctrine of the Church,

as well as his precision and practical spirit. These characteristics would become a fundamental point of reference and a model for the Society to follow in its future work.

In Spain, the most noteworthy example is Fr. Antonio Vicent SJ,¹⁷ whose knowledge of the work of Belgian and German Jesuits encouraged and enlightened his dedication to the social apostolate. He is particularly recognised for establishing Catholic Circles, the first of which was created in Manresa in 1864. His most important period was during his time in Tortosa (1880-1883) when he founded a large number of Circles, spreading them throughout the towns of the Levante region. A good description of the Circles is found in his work *Anarquismo y socialismo*.¹⁸ He viewed them as a remedy for the workers' loss of faith, which—in his understanding—was the reason why anarchism and socialism flourished. With the Circles, he sought to strengthen the Christian faith so that it could combat the threat of the ideologies that endangered it. They therefore had an openly religious ethos and were required to be “Catholic, apostolic and Roman, and of good conduct”. In turn, in their group culture, the Circles stood against individualism. They were guided by the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, as they were mixed groups that worked towards social harmony.

The Circles had a number of social objectives, such as increasing the salary of the workers and establishing juries to set wages. They sought to provide mutual assistance, accident insurance and retirement funds for the elderly. They also created job opportunities for the unemployed, set up savings banks, and offered training both for apprentices and higher skilled workers. They curtailed profiteering by establishing savings banks and

¹⁷ He was born in Castellón de la Plana in 1837 and died in Valencia in 1912. See *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*, entry “Vicent”.

¹⁸ Antonio Vicent, *Socialismo y anarquismo. La Encíclica de Nuestro Santísimo Padre León XIII «De Conditione opificum» y los Círculos de obreros católicos*, Valencia, Imprenta de José Ortega, 1893, pp. 483ff.

Mounts of Piety or consumer associations. They also provided cultural and recreational services.

This was the “first emergence of Christian trade unionism in Spain”¹⁹: an emergence, but not a fully established reality. The Circles helped ignite the Catholic spirit for trade unionism, without going so far as to define their objectives as developing workers’ organisations and defending the rights of the poor classes. In 1893 there were about 135 Circles in Spain, with some 40,000 members. They would be the basis for Catholic social organising for years to come.

The Circles would decline in later years due to a number of factors: workers became less of a priority, businessmen soon lost interest; and in many instances, the Circles had to operate within restrictive ecclesial structures, enjoying little of the freedom experienced by socialist and anarchist movements. In essence, they lacked a trade union identity at a time when the workers’ cause so urgently needed one, and they found themselves unable to contribute.

Father Vicent would transform the Circles into Schools of Social Reform—based on his *Manual*²⁰—and steered them towards becoming involved in professional guilds. The most notable was the carpenters’ guild in Valencia. He also took it upon himself to promote workers’ issues and the apostolate within the dioceses, as it was his intention to set up cooperatives and friendly societies with the help of parish priests. Later he would dedicate himself to promoting agrarian unions. In 1905 he wrote *El problema agrario resuelto por los sindicatos agrícolas* [The Agrarian Problem Solved by Agrarian Unions].

Fr. José María Salaverri SJ²¹ established the *Círculo de Obremos Católicos de Burgos* [Burgos Catholic Workers Circle], which

¹⁹ García Nieto, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

²⁰ Antonio Vicent, *Manual de las Escuelas de Reforma Social*, Valencia, 1896.

²¹ He was born in Mondoñedo in 1959 and died in Santander in 1926.

from 1905 engaged in trade union activities. He created the *Federación de Sindicatos Obreros* [Federation of Workers' Unions], *Sindicatos Agrícolas* [Agricultural Trade Unions], the *Caja de Ahorros* [Savings Bank] and *Monte de Piedad* [Mount of Piety], the *Constructora Benéfica* [Charitable Construction Company], still in existence, and the *Escuela Hogar* [Home School] where there were sewing workshops. He also prepared a framework to set up *Sindicatos Agrarios Católicos* [Catholic Agrarian Unions] in the villages around the province of Burgos.

Another name that must be mentioned is Fr. Sisinio Nevares SJ,²² a Christian sociologist and a Catholic trade union organiser. He contributed to the organisation of Catholic agrarian unions in Palencia, which subsequently became a model for other Spanish regions. He began this work in his native Carrión in 1909, at the age of 31. He worked there during the summer, when on holidays from his primary occupation in academia, as a professor of history at the University of Deusto. By 1912 some 30 unions had been founded in southern Palencia, although he did not have a direct hand in creating all of them. They had a religious ethos and were mixed, that is, they brought together landowners, tenant farmers and day labourers. In 1912 he founded the *Federación Palentina de Sindicatos* [Federation of Trade Unions of Palencia] and spread its activities to other villages. He gave rallies in villages highlighting the advantages of the trade unions, rural savings banks and cooperatives. Between 1912-25 the *Federación* extended its activities from Valladolid to all sectors nationwide. It spread the Social Doctrine of the Church and promoted social institutions.

Fr. Nevares headed the *Casa Social Católica* in Valladolid, which helped to form trade unions, social-benefit organisations

²² He was born in Carrión de los Condes in 1878 and died in Valladolid in 1946. Consult Manuel Revuelta González, "El P. Sisinio Nevares. Etapas de su acción social y promoción de los sindicatos agrarios palentinos", in *Publicaciones de la institución Tello Téllez de Meneses* 76, 2005, pp. 355-393.

(employment offices, motherhood societies), educational and training organisations (schools, young workers, socio-historical studies) and economic organisations (consumer cooperatives, credit unions, savings and loan banks). From there he managed a large number of trade unions: local professional trade unions in Valladolid, national labour unions (rail and mining) and Catholic trade unions. Between 1924-36 he would dedicate himself to training leaders on Catholic social doctrine and on social issues, through “*Fomento Social*” [“Social Development”], an organisation that he founded in Valladolid and directed in Madrid from 1925. This was his major work, including a centre for research and study on social issues, courses and conferences to train social leaders, and the organisation of Catholic social institutions. In this period, he gained distinction as a writer and publisher on social issues such as social insurance, agrarian trade unionism, the minimum wage, agrarian reform, etc.

During the Civil War he enlisted as a military chaplain and spent three years at the front. His sensitivity to social issues meant he was keenly aware of people’s suffering. In letters to the Governor of Badajoz, the Papal Nuncio and Cardinal Gomá, he describes the neglect and the “miserable life suffered by the forgotten peasants, because of insufficient wages, religious and moral abandonment, illiteracy and lack of culture... and non-compliance with labour legislation and the Sunday rest.”²³ The assimilation of the workers’ and agrarian trade unions into one single trade union under the Franco regime disgusted him, as he saw his life’s work being destroyed.

Also worthy of mention is Fr. Gabriel Palau SJ²⁴ who dedicated his life to the spreading social movements in Spain and South America. He founded *Acción Social Popular* [ASP; Peoples’

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 388.

²⁴ He was born in Barcelona in 1863 and died in Buenos Aires in 1939. See *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*, entry “Palau”. Also see García Nieto, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–65.

Social Action] and *Asociación de Eclesiásticos para el Apostolado Popular* [Association of Ecclesiastics for the Peoples' Apostolate]. The ASP sought to promote a broad movement that would communicate ethical and Christian principles to inspire social and economic life. It stood against “antisocial tendencies” and ideas, working to support the masses. It was open to Catholics of all classes, training them in their “social, civic and religious duties”, by producing publications and organising conferences and general training courses. Due to a series of unfavourable circumstances, ASP was dissolved in 1916, giving rise to *Acción Popular*, under diocesan leadership.

In 1907, Palau himself founded the first Catholic trade union composed only of workers, the *Unión Profesional de Dependientes y Empleados de Comercio* [Professional Union of Shop Assistants]. Its program would be adopted by subsequent trade union initiatives. In this way, Catholic unions emerged and spread across Spain, accompanied by several publications on social or trade union issues.

As for *Italy*, it is worth noting the influence the Founding Fathers of *La Civiltà Cattolica* had on Catholic social thinking and the mark they left on Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*. They were the Frs. Curci, Liberatore and Taparelli.²⁵

Fr. Curci was highly critical of socialism, which he accused of being “the death of all human social life”,²⁶ because it aspired to destroy all existence, and he labelled it a subversive movement. Hence, it was in intrinsic contradiction to Christianity, because the latter offered the sole indispensable principle capable of sustaining social order: mutual love and charity between the

²⁵ Cf. Paul Droulers, “Question sociale, État, Église, dans la Civiltà Cattolica à ses débuts”, in *Cattolicesimo Sociale nei secoli XIX e XX*, Roma, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1982, pp. 95–122. Also see Giacomo Martina, *Storia della Compagnia di Gesù in Italia (1814–1983)*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2003.

²⁶ In Carlo Maria Curci, “Il socialismo plebeo ed il volterrianismo borghese”, in *La Civiltà Cattolica* No. 1, 1850, pp. 613–642, p. 613.

rich and the poor. Curci was however sensitive to social issues and criticised the rich for their religious indifference and moral corruption, they who had worsened the proletariat's situation by boastfully exhibiting the pleasures and luxury of their lives.

Fr. Liberatore would be one of the two editors of the first draft of *Rerum Novarum*, together with the Dominican Cardinal Tomasso Zigliara. In this draft, Liberatore presents the workers as the victims of the phenomenon of industrialisation. He believes that their travails are due to the suppression of guilds which left workers defenceless.²⁷ They were left disunited and dispersed, easy prey for businessmen hungry for power and greed. The Church offers an alternative through the formation of confraternities that serve as a counterweight to the power of the state. The promotion of confraternities helps to counteract the revolutionary project and is thus one of the Church's most important tasks. Within these confraternities, order and social harmony can be restored. They can set wages and prevent strikes.

During his years working at *La Civiltà Cattolica* he defended the value of human dignity; he understood that the Church serves this end, while civil powers neglect the intrinsic value of people. He believed that socialism aims to make the state the sole owner of property, destroying private property and denying any social hierarchy. For him, the French and Industrial Revolutions were the root causes of this evil, the consequences of which were suffered by the working class.

Father Taparelli, for his part, considered that although economics and politics are autonomous, they are subordinate to moral science and must be governed by its laws. Hence the primacy of the Church, defender of moral science, in defining some of

²⁷ The suppression of the guilds began in France in 1791, with a law coming into force on March 2nd, which said: "there are no guilds in the State, only the particular interest of each individual and the general interest." Cf. Vicent, *Socialismo y anarquismo... op. cit.*, p. 39.

the principles by which economics and politics must abide. He identified doctrinal errors in secular liberalism and saw the modern state as an heir of the Lutheran Reformation, something that prevented the recognition of the legitimacy of its democracy and parliamentary institutions.

It can be seen that quite a few of the ideas that these men dealt with went on to influence *Rerum Novarum*, and they offered an interpretative framework for their context and gave direction to the Church's actions.

3.6 Opening up to the Realities of the Labour Question

To conclude, the historical events covered in this chapter span a large time period in which the Church, as well as the Society, formulated a response to a new dilemma: The Labour Question. It was the dawn of a fresh focus on marginalised people, and in the nineteenth century their attention turned to the workers, the new poor. The ecclesial reaction to their existence and suffering was rapid and varied, giving rise to several initiatives. Through creativity and imagination, a rich variety of apostolates were founded: workers' groups to cultivate internal solidarity, mixed corporations, training on social issues, denouncing living conditions, developing a distinct Christian social thought, living alongside workers, among others.

The Society played its part and had an important influence on the ecclesial approach and reflection, but it must be comprehended within an enormous effort made by the entire Church to respond to the challenge of industrialisation. It acted as part of the Church, which it enriched from within, though it was neither a particularly key actor nor a vanguard. This does not devalue its contribution, rather situates it within a quest shared with the entire ecclesial community. In any case, a good number of Jesuits stood out as leaders in this area, completely dedicating their energy and lives to it.

Rerum Novarum is of paramount importance. It would become a constant reference for future decades, right up to the present day. Industrial society and the conflict between workers and capital, to which the encyclical responded, are still issues today. This Encyclical gave a stamp of approval to activities in favour of workers and outlined the fundamentals of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Many ecclesial initiatives during that time would take inspiration from the document's recommendations.

Although some members of the ecclesial community responded admirably to the Labour Question, in the end their efforts proved insufficient. The majority in the Church and the Society were not involved. The bulk of both the ecclesial community and the Society itself remained on the side-lines, preferring to dedicate themselves to other groups, that fervently embraced the faith. Moreover, the rapidly expanding working classes and the magnitude of their suffering required a much greater effort, which did not occur. Perhaps as a consequence of this, or at least as a factor, the labour movement shifted towards socialism and turned away from the Church's message.

It was during this time that the traditional charitable approach slowly evolved, adopting a more social perspective that promoted the organisation of workers. A more collective perspective prevailed, not focusing on individual cases, but on broader societal groups. It was no longer about alleviating their living conditions but improving their context: their working conditions in companies and a legal system to guarantee their rights.

Catholics believed that workers and businessmen could find common ground, contrary to socialist movements that felt that improvements could only come through combat or revolution. In practice, the Church would find it difficult to accept and mediate this head-on collision. This was a life-or-death conflict over resources. The ecclesial community shied away from the conflict and sought an alternative accommodation through mixed groups

of employers and workers. In almost all cases, this solution was not fruitful.

During the nineteenth century there was intense nostalgia in the Church for the *Ancien Régime*, exacerbated by the loss of the Papal States. The status quo of the past disappeared, which the Church was unable to accept; rather, it rejected the consequences of the dual political and economic revolution. Its desire to defend a bygone era caused it to align with the interests of the aristocracy and even the bourgeoisie. In the eyes of the exploited workers, this was a Church distant to them and their struggles.

The Church—and likewise the Society—firmly opposed Marxist Socialism and tried to confront it. Marxism was identified as the ultimate enemy. Workers, on the other hand, aligned themselves to this philosophy, adding another contributing factor to the loss of faith among workers; something that would become more and more evident throughout the twentieth century. This opposition, in some form or another, would last until the death of communism in practice, after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Although the Church always maintained a critical stance towards capitalism, externally it was perceived as closer to the business class than to the workers.

The ecclesial service to the workers was paternalistic in nature. The initiatives belonged to the Church, not to the workers themselves. They were the object of the action, rather than actors themselves. As García Nieto said,²⁸ priests were excessively at the forefront and there was not enough lay involvement. On the contrary, Marxist Socialism offered more avenues of participation, although ultimately it was always a communist vanguard that dictated the steps to be taken.

These years saw the emergence and consolidation of *Action Populaire*, a work that gave direction to the subsequent evolution of the social apostolate. It would be a beacon of light illuminating the way forward. Elements of the social apostolate started

²⁸ García Nieto, *op. cit.*, pp. 177–178.

to take shape: interpreting reality, formation, teaching the Social Doctrine of the Church, the importance of educating the clergy on social teachings, etc. *Action Populaire* would serve as an inspiration for many publications and social centres in years to come, especially in the French-speaking world. It would lay the institutional foundations for the future work of the social apostolate.

Within the response to the Labour Question, the evangelising mission continued to be the key concern. One of the fundamental problems which they tried to address was the loss of the workers' faith and their distancing from Church teachings. This reduced the credibility of what genuine motivations they had to protect the workers. As a result, trade unions with a Catholic ethos were founded where the faith dimension enjoyed as much or greater priority as the workers' own problems.

In any case, the efforts made to respond to the new reality of the working class over many decades is commendable. The Jesuits who became involved in this task laid solid foundations for work into the future and paved the way for those who followed their path.



A Voice of Protest: The Reaction to Fascism

The appearance of fascism in the interwar period was an unexpected challenge for which societies were unprepared. It was a new, unknown political movement that only with the passage of time would reveal its true totalitarian and brutal face. It emerged first in Italy with Benito Mussolini, then in Germany with Adolf Hitler and later in Spain with Francisco Franco. In each of these countries, fascism took power and developed in different ways. There were some points in common, but also notable differences.

Also, for the Church, fascism constituted a difficult test. Fascism proclaimed itself as a third way that directly confronted socialism and communism, persecuting its activists and warding off the possibility of a red social revolution, something convenient in the eyes of the Catholic Church which regarded Marxist socialism as a moral error and a social threat. For this reason, it identified fascism as a firm opponent of the threat of social revolution. In addition, in countries with a large Catholic presence, the Church had to make deals with fascist regimes. These sought political pacts with the Holy See, in order to secure the goodwill and support of a fundamentally Catholic citizenship. The Church found itself in a position to negotiate with these states to agree stable and beneficial legal relationships, which had been severely weakened after the loss of the Papal States the previous century. But on the other hand, it gradually became aware of the nature of

these movements which unleashed terror to impose a totalitarian regime on the streets and in public institutions, one which aspired to invade all social spheres.

The Church reacted differently in the three countries, as did the Society. There were many elements at play: who would hold the political hegemony in those countries where the Left was gaining momentum, the opportunity to achieve beneficial pacts with states, the Church's ecclesial freedom, and the possibility of war. All of this taking place in the interwar period, the twentieth century's time of peace which saw the most social upheaval.

This chapter describes the situation experienced in Europe in the decades prior to the Second World War, situating it in its historical context. It subsequently deals with the Church and the Society's reaction to fascism in the three countries mentioned—Italy, Germany and Spain—because, as in the previous chapter on the Labour Question, the Society's response again was set within the Church's broader activities. The Spanish case will be dealt with more briefly. The chapter also includes information about the Society's reaction in the face of the persecution of Jews. Finally, it finishes with some concluding reflections.

One question that may arise is whether this chapter is dealing with the social apostolate in a strict sense. Certainly, the theme seems quite different from the one addressed in other chapters, as if it were set apart from them. In fact, when the Society spoke about the social apostolate in those years, it referred to other realities. However, the challenge posed by fascism for the societies of its time and for human integrity make this a space in which we can analyse how the Society reacted when faced with an eminently social challenge. Here we have a real case study of the types of social responses, not exclusively religious, that were capable of inspiring faith, in societies beset by conditions of utmost stress and disorientation at that time.

4.1 Rising Fascism in the Tumultuous Interwar Period

In the interwar period the liberal capitalist world economy found itself on the verge of collapse. The turmoil produced by the economic crisis of the 1930s hindered any pathway to recovery. The recurring fluctuations of capital had driven the very economic system to existential crisis and capitalist growth seemed at a halt.¹

The economic crisis took shape following the First World War when each state began to protect its own economy against foreign competition. This dealt a blow to a world economy that was already under severe strain.

The victorious nations of the Great War, like Great Britain and the United States, did everything in their grasp to reduce inflation in order to recover the economy that had existed prior to the explosion of armed conflict. During the period of growth immediately following the Great War, wage increases did not keep pace with economic growth. Profits went disproportionately into the hands of large investors, who pocketed an ever-increasing share of the wealth. This in turn caused overproduction and speculation.

Meanwhile, in the countries that suffered defeat, like Germany, inflation rose to unmanageable levels, reducing the value of the currency to nil from one day to the next. This was already underway by 1923 when the Mark had depreciated by a factor of one billion compared to 1913. Hence, in Germany private savings were completely wiped out, thus creating an almost complete void of capital to invest in productive activities. The German economy in the 1920s had to resort to taking enormous international loans.

In 1922-23 this staggering inflation was stopped in its tracks by governments' decision to freeze the printing of currency. By then, people in Germany who lived on their savings or fixed

¹ For historical considerations, Hobsbawm is followed, *Il secolo breve...* *op. cit.*, ch.3—*Nell abisso económico*—and ch. 4—*La caduta del liberalismo*.

interest had lost everything and found themselves on the street. This had a traumatic effect on the middle and lower middle classes.

At that time, only in the United States was the economy developing healthily. Large international flows of American capital moved into Europe, especially to Germany, which increased the vulnerability of the German economy and its exposure to any eventual disruption.

The collapse of the Wall Street stock exchange in New York on October 29th, 1929 sent the capitalist world economy into tailspin. The crisis hit the United States hardest, because until then demand had been driven by means of a broad expansion of credit to consumers. The severe US economic recession spread rapidly throughout Western countries, hitting Germany with particular ferocity. This caused a crisis in the production of both raw materials and essential foods. Depression became global.

Unemployment hit unprecedented levels and lasted longer than ever before. There was no unemployment benefit, not even in the United States, so states were under acute pressure to urgently seek solutions to widespread social suffering. Many people became desperate as savings and food ran out and businesses stopped giving out credit.

The disorientation and sense of catastrophe produced by this great crisis was perhaps greater felt among businessmen, economists and politicians, than among the working classes. There was a growing distrust of the liberal capitalist economic system. This feeling of bewilderment was sharpened when it became clear that the only country that had abandoned capitalism, the Soviet Union, remained immune to the crisis. Moreover, there was no unemployment there.

By 1932 there were increasing signs that the worst was over. In fact, some economies had already returned to growth. However, the world remained in depression. Capable and brilliant economists

saw that capitalism, left to its own devices, would lead to stagnation in the future.

The gravest consequence of the crisis was that ultra-nationalist, warmongering and aggressive regimes had taken power: in Japan in 1931 and in Germany in 1933. Curiously, the immediate result of the crisis in Europe was the very opposite of what the authors of social revolution had expected. Socialism found itself in a much-debilitated state. Only in North America did the Left make ground, with policies such as Roosevelt's New Deal, which in the end proved insufficient.

In the large areas of the planet under colonial rule the crisis bolstered anti-imperialist activity. It sparked social and political discontent among local populations which faced off with colonial governments. During these years the Muslim Brotherhood—founded in 1928—expanded in Egypt and Gandhi organised the second mass mobilisation of the Indian people.

Liberalism retreated between the two world wars because without the consensus of the majority of citizens in favour of the state and the social system, democratic systems are unable to operate smoothly and successfully. These attitudes are prevalent when countries prosper economically, a condition which was absent in the period from 1918 to the Second World War.

Traditional liberalism appeared dead or destined to ruin. Three possible avenues for cultural and political hegemony were opened: the first was Marxist communism. The second consisted of a reformed capitalism, without reliance on the supremacy of the free market, resulting from the marriage of moderate social democracy and the non-communist Left. After the Second World War this solution would be identified as the most effective. The third consisted of fascism, which the crisis transformed into a worldwide movement. In fact, what happened at the time was that Nazism faced the great crisis more quickly and more successfully than any other type of government.

At the moment when economic and political liberalism faltered, the threat came exclusively from the right. Fascism in its original Italian form and later in Germany as National Socialism, inspired other anti-liberal forces, supporting them and providing the international Right with a sense of historical confidence. In the 1930s, fascism was promoted as the bright way of the future. These forces opposed social revolution. They were all authoritarian and hostile to democratic political institutions. They built up the army and the police force and supported armed civilian militia willing to carry out street violence. They adopted ultra-nationalist positions, partly a product of resentment towards foreign states.

The optimal conditions for the triumph of fascism were provided by an outdated state with mechanisms of government that were not fit for use; a mass of disoriented, disillusioned and discontented citizens who no longer knew where to look for authority; strong socialist movements that threatened social revolution, but did not have the necessary means to carry it out; and a wave of nationalist resentment against the peace treaties of 1918 to 1920.

The middle and lower social classes made up the backbone of the fascist movements during the years of its rise to power. The bourgeois classes joined in the early 30s. The growth of the radical Right after the First World War was a response to the danger of social revolution, a consequence of the fear of the organised working class. Without the October Revolution and Leninism there would have been no fascism. The difference with fascism was that, once in power, it rejected the rules of the old political game and assumed totalitarian control of the state, wherever it was given the opportunity.

Fascism first took shape in Italy, and its name came from there. It was founded by the journalist and repentant ex-socialist Benito Mussolini. His name had been chosen by his parents in homage to the anti-clerical president of Mexico, Benito Juárez, who symbolised the passionate anti-clericalism of Mussolini's home

province, Emilia Romagna. He combined conservative values, techniques of mass democracy and a novel but aggressive ideology, characterised by barbarity, violence and ultra-nationalism. These were bound together by the feelings of resentment among the masses who felt crushed between the irrationality of the market and the fear of working-class revolution. They opposed both liberalism and communism.

A majority of early Italian fascists were ex-military. The Great War was a machine that brutalised the soldiers and they were glorified for unleashing their latent bestiality. For these people, the combat experience had been the inspiring moment in their lives.

In Germany, the Weimar Republic fell mainly because the severe economic crisis it suffered made it impossible to maintain the tacit agreement between the state, the employers and the workers' organisations that the regime had previously upheld. In 1932 the Nazis and the Communists took an absolute majority of the votes while parties that supported the Republic had their vote share reduced to just under a third.

Hitler had been elected president of the National Socialist German Workers Party in 1921, on a program of left-wing nationalism. His later program would focus on the creation of the great German nation, identifying the Communists and the Jews as opponents. When he achieved an absolute majority in parliament in 1933, he called for full powers of Parliament. Once granted, he used them to eliminate his adversaries—the Communist Party and the German Nationalist Party—slash democratic institutions and expand his contact with the masses using efficient and carefully designed propaganda. In 1934, on the death of the President of the Republic, Marshal Hindenburg, he proclaimed himself head of state and supreme commander of the armed forces. In 1935 he would force all young people to enlist in Hitler youth movements.

Hitler quickly eliminated those within the National Socialist Party who identified with the socialist tendency. Nazism should

be viewed as a modernisation or revitalisation of the old regime and not as something substantially new or different. More than a revolutionary system, it was a regime that advanced the interests of the old ruling classes. It came into being, in fact, as a bulwark against the revolutionary social upheavals of the post-war period. For big capital, fascism had some great advantages over other systems, but above all it eliminated the danger of social revolution.

As for the Church, in general terms it identified with traditionalist reactionaries and also to a certain extent with the fascists, because of their rejection of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the French Revolution, with its historical transformations embodied in democracy, liberalism and the most immediate danger, atheist communism. In those early times, when liberalism felt under attack, the Church celebrated.

4.2 The Relationship with Fascism in Italy

The Church's initial reaction to the appearance of fascism was very critical. In 1922, shortly before Mussolini took power, *Civiltà Cattolica*² pointed out that fascism brought with it "excesses of destruction, division and violence."³ They compared socialism with fascism; both emerged from the same liberal matrix that ousted the divine origin of authority, which meant that "the moral force of law no longer rules, but brute force of the material reigns supreme, the famous 'law of the fist' of the age of barbarism, reinforced with the stick, the dagger or the pistol of the modern era."⁴ According to the editors of *Civiltà*, fascism imitated the violent and materialistic methods of socialism. The magazine affirmed

² *Civiltà Cattolica* is a magazine by the Society of Jesus in Italy founded in 1850. Since its inception, the Secretary of State of the Holy See reviews all its articles before they can be published. All texts must be written by Jesuits.

³ E. Rosa, "'L'unità d'Italia' e la disunione degli italiani", in *Civiltà Cattolica* No. 1735, 1922 (IV), pp. 97–110, p. 101.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

that fascism had the same spirit as socialism, but surpassed it in its arrogance, assassinations and barbarity. They called it “a paroxysm of disunity among Italians, an impotent effort of old liberalism, of Freemasons, farmers, rich industrialists, journalists... who are the worst culprits of society’s current religious and moral perversion.”⁵ In a later article in the publication, it explained that fascism’s authority was upheld by the fickle will of the people, which was not even the “will of the nation,” but the whim of a small, audacious and arrogant minority, aligned with the fascist state.⁶ The Jesuit magazine’s keen insight is plain to see in its sharp identification of some essential features of fascism since its arrival into the public sphere. It is also fair to assume that the Vatican agreed with this diagnosis, given that each article had to request its consent before publication.

The first of the articles cited was not welcomed by the then Superior General, Fr. Ledóchowski, because he feared Italian Jesuits would be censored by the new Government. In a letter from the Fr. General to the author, Fr. Rosa, he told him that he felt “very hurt... I ask you to be more cautious in the future.”⁷ From then on, the magazine tried to soften its criticism of fascism, so that although it denounced the violence of the fascist brigades, “it worked to give fascism legitimacy in the eyes of the Catholic population.”⁸

Despite Mussolini’s early criticism, he had realised the need to win over the Church to consolidate his power. He knew that the average citizen was a practicing Catholic and that the Church had significant influence over his circumstances. That is why he

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁶ E. Rosa, “Crisi di Stato y crisi di autorità”, in *La Civiltà Cattolica* No. 1737, 1922 (IV), pp. 193–204, p. 201.

⁷ At the back of *Civiltà Cattolica*, cited in Giovanni Sale, “Pio XI e Mussolini. Primi provvedimenti del governo fascista in favore della Chiesa”, in *La Civiltà Cattolica* No. 3750, 2006 (III), pp. 457–470.

⁸ Sale, *Pius XI e Mussolini ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 460.

wanted to win the Church's approval, trusting that this would gain him public support. For this reason, fascism was presented to the Italians as a defender of national religious interests. Shortly after forming a government in 1922, the executive reinstated crucifixes in hospitals which the liberal government had taken down, made substantial donations for the reconstruction of churches damaged during the war, took measures to uphold public morality, and transferred the library of the Palazzo Chigi to the Vatican. In addition, there were reforms to the school system—including compulsory religious tuition—and public statements were issued on the incompatibility between the principles of fascism and those of Freemasonry.⁹ These last two measures were particularly welcomed by the ecclesial authorities.

The Church was happy with how it was being treated under fascism and began to consider it as the only political force capable of stopping both the subversive force of socialism and communism, and Freemasonry, which was always opposed by the ecclesial hierarchy. In public, it maintained impartiality between the PPI¹⁰ and fascism, although in reality it only considered the former as truly one of the Church's own.

In 1926 a crisis broke out between the fascist government and the Church when Mussolini established the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* for the support and physical education of young people.¹¹ His intentions was for all young Italians aged eight to eighteen to be incorporated into a training system that was completely in the hands of the regime. There would be a Catholic chaplain for each group who would operate under the supervision of a central inspector, something that implied an interference with the Church's autonomy. This work was under the supervision of the head of

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 467.

¹⁰ *Partito Popolare Italiano* [Italian People's Party], founded in 1919, which was a means of political expression for Italian Catholics.

¹¹ Cf. Giovanni Sale, "Pio XI, Mussolini e il regolamento dei Balilla", in *La Civiltà Cattolica* No. 3758, 2007 (I), pp. 112–125.

state and in practice controlled by members of the Fascist Party. It was notorious for its totalitarian intentions. Other educational organisations were forbidden, and young people were obliged to wear a badge, the *littorio*—the fascist symbol—or the initials ONB of the *Opera Nazionale Balilla*. This provoked a serious dispute with the Church, which considered it had a right to exercise the freedom to morally and spiritually educate young people.

This measure caused great displeasure in the Holy See, which wanted to defend its Boy Scouts, because it was one of the most active sections of Catholic Action. Mussolini, on the other hand, wanted them to disappear, because he hoped to absorb these Catholic associations into the new youth organisation. Before the law that established the ONB came into force, Fr. Tacchi Venturi SJ¹² acted as mediator between the government and the Holy See. Due to various circumstances, over the years this Jesuit operated as a link between the Vatican and Mussolini's government, eventually becoming a permanent adviser.

Fr. Venturi was favourable to the presence of chaplains in the ONB, so he did not oppose the proposed law. He did not give enough consideration to the fact that accepting it meant publicly recognising the exclusive right of the fascist regime to the moral and spiritual education of young people and giving approval to an organisation that was understood to be incompatible with the Christian faith. In the end, Mussolini agreed not to interfere with Catholic associations so long as their activities remained exclusively religious. In any case, the situation became increasingly complicated for the Boy Scouts. In the end, Pope Pius XI tolerated the dissolution of these groups, as well as Catholic sports associations, and the absorption of Catholic trade unions and cooperatives into the fascist labour confederation. In part he did so because he wanted to develop a new formal relationship with the state which would allow the Church to defend its rights.

¹² Cf. Entry "Tacchi Venturi" in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*

The opportunity came sometime later, in 1929, when in the midst of all the tension between the Church and the State, the Lateran Pacts were signed. With them, the Church was granted full authority over the territory of the Vatican, thus solving the “Roman Question”, which had been pending resolution since 1870, the year when the Kingdom of Italy conquered the Vatican States. In addition, there was a significant financial settlement to compensate for the loss of patrimony during the war. The Pacts included the Concordat in which the Italian State rescinded its religious neutrality and privileged the Catholic confession above all others. It went so far as to say that Catholic education was the cornerstone and the pinnacle of public education. The Church, for its part, promised that the bishops would swear allegiance to the State of Italy and priests would be forbidden from entering politics. The Church was not allowed to interfere in any way in Italian social or civic life.

The Lateran Pacts heralded a time of peaceful dialogue between Church and State. Meanwhile, fascism tried to gain control over all aspects of Italian life. Through the Pacts, Mussolini achieved the backing of the Catholic population for his regime. For its part, the Church hoped that fascism’s combating of socialism and liberalism would give rise to a re-evaluation of Christianity in Italian public life.

A new dispute occurred in 1931 when the regime struck out against Catholic Action, as it was the only non-fascist organisation that was free to hold meetings without restrictions. Mussolini’s regime did not want any competition to its youth organisations. Some Catholic educational circles were attacked. The Papacy reacted in full force. Fr. Tacchi Venturi mediated once again in this conflict and Catholic Action was permitted to continue its activities. The commitment was reached that the circles would continue their activities, so long as they did not interfere in political matters.

The fascist decision to participate in the war in Spain in support of the rebel generals received strong support from the Holy See.¹³ Later, conflict again broke out following a new government decision. In 1938 Mussolini passed the racial laws, directed mainly against people of Jewish origin. In this case the Pope's protest focused on defending the rights of Jews who had converted to the Catholic faith. He would not accept the fact that in a mixed marriage, the Jewish spouse was stripped of their rights. In this case, the Vatican did not manage to get Mussolini to back down.

In 1932, Fr. Venturi himself organised the only meeting that took place between Pius XI and Mussolini. As a papal envoy, during four audiences with Mussolini, Fr. Venturi tried to achieve a peaceful solution to the war in Ethiopia. In 1938 he tried to moderate the racial laws, something he did not achieve, and in 1939 at the request of Pius XII, he made the case against Italy's participation in the developing Second World War.

It can be seen that the Church's relationship—and along with it, that of the Society—with fascism was considerably nuanced. The Jesuits did not definitively oppose the fascist government.¹⁴ About forty Jesuits were army chaplains before the fall of Mussolini. Its position only changed significantly when Italy was occupied by the Nazis.

4.3 The Situation in Germany

From 1930 the Church in Germany expressed reservations towards Nazism and even forbade the faithful to support the

¹³ The decisive *Collective Letter of the Spanish Bishops in relation to the war in Spain* (July 1, 1937), prepared by Cardinal Gomá to definitively settle the Church's position in relation to the Spanish Civil War. A good description of the events can be found in Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, *Para ganar la guerra, para ganar la paz. Iglesia y Guerra Civil: 1936–1939*, Madrid, Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 1995.

¹⁴ Cf. Vincent A. Lapomarda, *The Jesuits and the Third Reich*, New York, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989, p. 217.

party.¹⁵ In 1933 at a meeting in Fulda, the German bishops outlined the dangers they perceived in National Socialism. They identified the intensification of nationalism and racial absolutism and reasserted the Church's freedom in the face of state interference and its desire to appropriate the Catholic youth movements.

In spite of this situation, that same year the Concordat between the Holy See and German Reich successfully was signed, on Hitler's own initiative; he wanted to demonstrate that Nazism was based on Christian foundations. The Concordat gave him important international recognition. For his part, Pius XI promoted these concordat agreements with different countries, because he realised that they safeguarded the Church's position; a much weaker one after the loss of the Vatican States in 1870. The Concordat benefited the Church in many respects; it gave the Church the freedom to communicate with Rome and to manage its seminaries, religious education, military chaplaincies and hospitals, etc. The Vatican felt that it had gained legal security, before the attacks against the Catholics commenced, as they already anticipated at the time.

Hitler tried to reduce the influence of "Political Catholicism", because he considered it an adversary in the precise sphere in which he wanted to exert his dominance. He did not respect the Concordat, instead restricting the Church's activities and engaging in propaganda to discredit the Catholic faith. He reduced the Church and religious congregation's freedom to carry out religious education and increasingly extended his control over the youth. Ecclesial protests proliferated. In this way, although he always claimed that National Socialism had Christian underpinnings, Hitler constantly sought to undermine the Church's presence and activities with the aim of creating a national Church.

¹⁵ Cf. Camacho, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

4.3.1 *The Publication of the Encyclical Mit brennender Sorge*

Tensions rose in 1936 when the State decided to completely abolish Catholic ethos education. The Holy See then decided to draw up a public document for all German Catholics, the Encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, to denounce the situation to which the Church was being subjected, to combat Nazi neo-paganism¹⁶ and to give Catholic people encouragement in those testing times. The text avoided specifically mentioning National Socialism and overly controversial tones, for fear of possible reprisals by the regime. The initial draft was prepared by Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich.

The text would point out that the faith of the German Catholics, “like gold, is being tested in the fire of tribulation and persecution, when your religious freedom is beset on all sides, when the lack of religious teaching and of normal defence is heavily weighing on you.”¹⁷

It would also say that whoever worships the values of a race or a people, and “raises these notions above their standard value and divinises them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God; he is far from the true faith in God.”¹⁸ In this way it stood against the creation of a national church separate from Rome and the comparison of Jesus with any other person.

The text also criticised the government’s decision to suppress the teaching of the Old Testament,¹⁹ which was done to eliminate any reference to the Jewish people in the Christian faith. It denounced the arbitrary measures against the clergy and public

¹⁶ This had been propagated through Alfred Rosenberg’s book, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*.

¹⁷ Pius XI, *Encyclical Mit brennender Sorge, On the Church and the German Reich*, March 14, 1937, No. 6. It can be found in <https://bitly.es/LntChRqU>, visited June 2019.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 9.

displays,²⁰ as well as the disruption of the Church's educational service.²¹ Also, the Encyclical passed judgement on the principle "right is common utility" as a dangerous one, because if it is divorced from the law of ethics, "the principle would in international law carry a perpetual state of war between nations."²²

The Pope showed particular concern for young people, forced from the age of ten to enlist in Nazi organisations. He would say that when this occurs, "it is the absolute right of youths as well as of parents to see to it that this organisation is purged of all manifestations hostile to the Church and Christianity."²³ It sent a message of encouragement to members of Catholic associations, for having "stood by the rights which a solemn treaty had guaranteed to the Church and to themselves."²⁴

The Encyclical was read in all churches on Palm Sunday, March 21st, 1937, without giving prior notice to the government. This enraged the Nazi regime, which soon made its protest to Rome, calling the Letter a serious violation of the terms of the Concordat and an attempt by the Church to establish itself as a state within the State.

4.3.2 *The Society's Reaction*

The Society of Jesus' activities were greatly restricted during this period. It was prevented from carrying out its educational work in schools, pastoral work in parishes, giving spiritual exercises, accompanying youth organisations and organising cultural activities. The Schools of Theology in Frankfurt were shut down.²⁵ The

²⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 19.

²¹ *Ibid.*, No. 5.

²² *Ibid.*, No. 30.

²³ *Ibid.*, No. 33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, No. 38.

²⁵ The one in Innsbruck would also be closed and later the German theologate in exile in Valkenburg, Holland.

“de-confessionalisation of public life”²⁶ was cited as justification for this move. This was part of an attempt to monopolise public space and exert total control over it, purging it of other influences, religious ones included.

The Society was regarded with particular suspicion by the Nazi regime, as it was particularly connected internationally. It seemed that Heinrich Himmler had a particular obsession with the Jesuits, whom he identified as “enemies of the state”, while at the same time modelling his SS on their organisational structure. The Jesuits embodied his ideal of a select elite, carefully trained, obedient to a superior and prepared for any complex mission. The Nazis did not want to make the Jesuits martyrs, but to discredit them by framing them as criminals. There were several arrests of Jesuits in Bavaria, accused of “abusing the pulpit”, under an old law from Chancellor Bismarck’s era.

4.3.3 *Rupert Mayer*

The following details noteworthy examples of Jesuits who resisted the onslaught of Nazism. The first and one of the best known is Rupert Mayer,²⁷ who has since been beatified. In 1912, he was posted to Munich, where he attended to the dire needs of migrants arriving from the countryside. Two years later, he founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family to take care of those people, and he served as their chaplain to the end of his life.

²⁶ Entry “Nacionalsocialismo” in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*

²⁷ Cf. Entry “Mayer” in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*; Manuel Alcalá, “Rupert Mayer SJ (1875–1945) hechura de Ignacio”, in *Manresa* No. 235, vol. 60, 1988, pp. 147–64; Paolo Molinari, “P. Rupert Mayer ‘L’apostolo di Monaco””, in *Civiltà Cattolica* No. 3286, 1987 (II), pp. 326–39; Fermín Lator, “El P. Ruperto Mayer sj”, in *Razón y Fe* 790, 168, 1963, pp. 331–344. Fr. Lator attended Mayer’s trial on July 22, 1937, at the Provincial’s request, who feared that permission would not be given to German Jesuits. This last article includes, among other issues, an autobiographical account of what happened during the trial.

Later, he participated in the First World War as a military chaplain, accompanying the troops at the front. In the Battle of the Somme he was awarded the Iron Cross for the courage he showed in rescuing a wounded soldier, exposing himself to enemy fire. He was the first Catholic chaplain to receive this distinction. In 1916 a grenade ripped off his left foot. He was on death's door and had to have his leg amputated. He was not someone who could be labelled as unpatriotic.

Subsequently, he became one of the most important preachers in Munich and was widely known and appreciated. The public recognition of his service at the front would protect him. From the outset, when National Socialism came into the public sphere, he was an open critic. In 1923 he stated in the city that a Christian could not be a Nazi, for which he was almost lynched. From the pulpit he was always incisive. In 1930, when Nazism was on the rise, he wrote to Cardinal Faulhaber, warning him about the "The Hitler Lie", which was creating turmoil. In a subsequent diocesan synod, the Cardinal wrote that "National Socialism is a heresy irreconcilable with the Christian worldview."²⁸

Mayer was always unequivocal when he raised his voice in protest, which made him a target. At the end of 1935 the Gestapo denounced him for using the pulpit against the authority of the State. He would say: "Of course I have spoken of the enemies who today preach a new religion, declare war on Christianity and prophecy the sinking of the Catholic Church."²⁹ Complaints mounted, and he was warned that he could be banned from speaking in public.

After the publication of the Encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*, Himmler ordered the closing of printing presses and proceedings began against members of the clergy and religious orders. Mayer again denounced these actions in the Church. Finally, in 1937,

²⁸ Quoted by Alcalá, *Rupert Mayer... op. cit.*, p. 151.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

he was arrested by Gestapo agents in his community. He was released on condition that he would refrain from speaking in public. He refused: "I declare that, in the future, I will continue defending the Church from the pulpit against any attack with all my determination, clarity and energy... I will do it even though state employees, police and judges consider my sermons as punishable acts and abuse of the pulpit." He had no intention of giving in. By agreeing to be silenced, people would understand that he was bowing to their will and abandoning his convictions. He rejected this. For him, remaining silent when something needed to be said was tantamount to true betrayal. He was a prophet burning with the message.

As a result, Mayer was taken to Stadelheim prison. Once prosecuted, he was sentenced to six months imprisonment. On returning home, he asked his provincial, Fr. Augustin Rösch, to allow him to continue preaching. After many meetings, in full knowledge of the risk to the Society, his superior granted him permission. Mayer preached at the beginning of January 1938 in St. Michael's Church. He was again arrested and taken to Landsberg. He would ask his provincial not to plead his case and, what is more, not to accept the Gestapo's ban on preaching. "[I do not want] to give even the slightest impression that I would submit to such a ban."³⁰ He believed that his Catholic faithful would not comprehend the move and would lose confidence in him. They would have thought, "He acts just like the rest."³¹

In May 1938 Mayer was released. When war broke out in September 1939, the Gestapo imposed a state of emergency. He was arrested in November and was asked to provide information on people with whom he had contact. He refused to give it, under religious confidentiality. They took him without trial to the Sachsenhausen camp in Berlin. He spent a month in solitary

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

³¹ Molinari, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

confinement, leaving him on the verge of collapse and his health deteriorated. He longed to be executed. But they did not want to martyr him.

Mayer remained in confinement in the monastery of Ettal (Bavaria). He lamented the conciliatory attitude of the episcopate, because he believed the time had come for denunciation and not appeasement. He stayed there for about five years. He felt silenced by the Church. Meanwhile, he heard tell of the wrongdoings inflicted on the Church and the Society: chaplains expelled, communities occupied and companions arrested, some of whom would eventually die in concentration camps.

On May 6th, 1945, he was released and went to Munich to preach at the Feast of the Ascension. He spoke of love for one's enemies, and the generosity and forgiveness that entails. An aged man, he restarted his work on behalf of the poor, the unemployed and prisoners. He died shortly after, on November 1st of that same year, at the age of 69. John Paul II beatified him in Munich on May 3rd, 1987.

4.3.4 *Alfred Delp*

Delp came from Mannheim, where he was born in 1907, to a Catholic mother and a Lutheran father. He joined the Society at the age of 17, where he demonstrated a perceptive, idealistic personality and his energy and gift for leadership.³² When Hitler came to power in 1933, Delp welcomed his victory. He felt that the German pride wounded after the war would be restored. He was even happier about the steadying of the economy and the signing of the German Concordat with the Church that same year. Alfred even went so far as to support the establishment of the Hitler Youth at the Society's school in Feldkirch. He was ordained in

³² Cf. Entry "Delp" in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*; Manuel Alcalá, "Alfred Delp (1907–1945). Jesuita, pronazi, conjurado, mártir", in *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 66 (1991), pp. 307–326.

Munich in 1937 by Cardinal Faulhaber. Sometime later, he heard the Encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge* and also of Mayer's arrest.

When Germany took Austria in March 1938, many Jesuits and priests celebrated. But the Nazi regime turned them into targets and soon the Jesuits themselves would be persecuted: the faculty of theology in Innsbruck was shut down, so too were the colleges in Linz and Vienna, and the "Canisianum" seminary. Some of the teaching staff had to seek refuge in Switzerland. Meanwhile, news spread of concentration camps for political prisoners. In reality, Dachau had been operational since 1933.

As this news came through, Alfred gradually underwent a transformation. In 1939 he was denied entry to the University of Munich, seemingly for being a member of the Jesuits. That same year he was appointed editor of the magazine *Stimmen der Zeit*, for the section on social issues. The magazine had been under surveillance since 1935 when it published an editorial on state sanctioned violence, following the "Night of the Long Knives", although it had been critical of National Socialism since 1933.³³ The authorities forced Alfred to write about certain topics such as "war as a spiritual enterprise" and "the exaltation of the hero."³⁴ In 1941 the Gestapo stormed his "Canisiushaus" community, due to the "treacherous attitude of its residents". It was one of more than 200 occupations of Church premises. A little later he was banned from writing in Germany.

All these events turned Delp into a convinced opponent of Nazism. From 1941 to 1944 he organised a busy schedule of conferences, workshops and retreats in several dioceses. Meanwhile, the situation for Jesuits was getting worse. Among other things, Hitler had already ordered the expulsion of all members of the Society of Jesus from the army, in which they had served as chaplains.

³³ Vincent A. Lapomarda, *The Jesuits and the Third Reich*, New York, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989, p. 11.

³⁴ Alcalá, *Alfred Delp ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

In 1942, Augustin Rösch, Delp's provincial, called him to ask if he wanted to participate as an advisor in a circle of people resisting Nazism. They were considering Germany's democratic future after its expected future defeat in the war, and he could be of assistance. The provincial himself participated in the group, which would come to be called *Kreisau Circle*. There were also two other Jesuits, Lothar König and Hans von Galli. Its founders were Helmut J. von Moltke, specialist in international law and member of the Army General Staff, and Peter Y. von Wartenburg, advisor to the Berlin Government on defence economics issues. Their activities were clandestine, because in the eyes of the regime imagining defeat was a betrayal in itself. The Circle held several meetings, in which they spoke about the State and the Church, socialism, foreign policy and the economy. Sometimes they met at Moltke's residence and sometimes at the Society's residences.

On July 20th, 1944, Count Claus von Stauffenberg attempted to assassinate Hitler, but the *Führer* survived unscathed. A ferocious retaliation was unleashed with countless arrests. A diary was seized which listed the address of Delp's parish, and he was immediately arrested on July 27th. He was taken to the prison in Lehrterstrasse, tortured and interrogated. After a harrowing month he was transferred to Tegel prison. There two of his friends from Berlin, Marianne Happig and Marianne Pünder, were able to collect his dirty clothes—at first stained with blood from his torture—once a week, and bring him wine, hosts, cigarettes, paper and a pen.

He would celebrate the Eucharist every day during the changing of the guard so as not to be discovered. He also wrote notes that he smuggled out with the change of clothes the following week. These pages, carefully collected by his two friends, today make up the shocking diary³⁵ of a man condemned to death,

³⁵ Alfred Delp, *Escritos Desde La Prisión*, Santander, Sal Terrae, 2012.

contemplating his life and its events in light of the faith, while clinging until the last day to the hope of salvation, as the Russian army quickly advanced, constantly pushing back the German front.

Alfred fought to survive and put his faith in a “miracle”. He wrote in handcuffs, with barely any light, fearing discovery. It was in this manner that he signed his solemn profession, his final admission to the Society, which his Provincial had previously delayed, causing him great grief. The Society received him as a man sentenced to death. He pronounced the vows in front of his companion Franz von Tattenbach, in the visiting room. He spoke in Latin, so that the guard would not understand. “It’s a will” he said to him. Delp would later write: “The Lord has found me worthy of his chains of love”³⁶ in reference to the chains on his wrists.

His trial began on January 5, in which he was accused of having been a member of the *Kreisau Circle* and of not having reported their conspiracy. In reality, no link could be established between the assassination attempt and the Circle. The legal argument of the sentence against Delp and Moltke, who was also tried, indicated that Delp had made presentations in *Kreisau* on the teachings of the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* and the social function of property. The trial was filmed by two cameras at the request of Hitler. Some of its images were screened at the 1983 Berlinale, causing a strong impact.

Delp and Moltke were sentenced to death. The last page of his diary was written to his Jesuit brothers. In it he apologised for any harm he may have caused and asked them to care for his “old and sick” parents. He went on to say that “the actual reason for my sentence is that I am and continue to be a Jesuit. No connection could be shown to July 20th (Hitler assassination attempt). Other

³⁶ Alcalá, *Alfred Delp... op. cit.*, p. 323.

charges... were much less serious and more factual... May God bless you all. I ask for your prayers. I will strive to compensate from above for all the debts I leave here below."³⁷

He was executed by hanging on February 1st, 1945, in Plötzensee prison, after making his confession and receiving the Viaticum. He was 37 years old.

4.3.5 *Other Jesuits*

These were not the only Jesuits who opposed the Nazi regime. Another man who played a particularly important role was the aforementioned **Fr. Augustin Rösch**,³⁸ born in Bavaria in 1893. He was the provincial of Germany during the hardest and most dangerous years from 1935 to 1944. He did not waver in his opposition to the Hitler government and in defending the rights of the Church. He participated in the drafting of the German bishops' condemnation of Nazism. He supported Rupert Mayer and invited several Jesuits to participate, like him, in the *Kreisau Circle*. He was arrested on January 11th, 1945, in Munich, and was transferred to Berlin to face various charges. His trial could not proceed because of the war situation and by the end of April of that year he would be released.

Between 1946 and 1961 he was director of Caritas in Bavaria. He assisted in the provision of food and shelter to those affected by bombings and fugitives from East Germany. From 1947 to 1961 he was a member of the Bavarian Senate. He sought to realise the social objectives that the *Kreisau Circle* had planned, like establishing a new Christian social order. He died in 1961 in Munich. Without his support, Jesuits opposing to Nazism would have had to face many more difficulties. He accompanied and encouraged them.

³⁷ Delp, *Escritos Desde La Prisión... op. cit.*, pp. 222–223.

³⁸ Entry "Rosch" in *Diccionario Histórico, op. cit.*

One of the first Jesuits to write about and criticise Nazism was **Friedrich Muckermann**,³⁹ who produced the magazine *Der Gral* from 1920. An articulate man and a gifted writer, he publicly confronted Nazism, supporting Catholic resistance in Germany. He was invited by Hitler and Göring to a meeting in a place of his choosing. He responded by saying that he would have no dealings with thugs.⁴⁰ From then on, he had to take refuge in the Netherlands. Wherever he went, Rome (1936), Vienna (1937) or Paris (1937), he spoke out to expose Nazism. He was stripped of his German nationality and would only have it reinstated after his death.

Max Pribilla also bears mentioning, who, in response to “The Night of the Long Knives”—30th June 1934—and the subsequent silence from the bishops, wrote: “Silence has its limits. There are times when, even if it is clear there is nothing to be gained, something must be said, just because it is true. If it is not said, the moral order of the world receives a blow that is harder to overcome than an assault of brute force... Well, lately, the worst thing that could happen is that truth and justice may no longer find representatives and martyrs on earth.”⁴¹ The government banned him from writing.

More names could be mentioned: Josef Spieker (1893-1968), a priest in Cologne, who was arrested in 1934, for “abuse of the pulpit”. He was one of the first prisoners in Dachau and was later released, under the threat of reprisals if he revealed what he had experienced. Alois Grimm and Johannes Steinmayer were beheaded in 1944. All these cases show some of the stances taken by these men in those years of horror.

For their part, the Nazis had no fond feelings towards the Jesuits, and they used different strategies, as has already been seen,

³⁹ Cf. F. Cavalli, “Aspetti della resistenza dei cattolici tedeschi contro il nazionalsocialismo”, in *Civiltà Cattolica* No. 2349, 1948 (II), pp. 283–292 and entry “Muckermann” in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Cavalli, p. 284.

⁴¹ Lampomarda, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

including imprisonment, to silence the educators, preachers and writers who raised criticisms of the Third Reich.⁴²

4.4 The Church's Position in Spain

Fascism in Spain was introduced by the *Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista* [JONS; Councils of the National-Syndicalist Offensive], founded in 1931 by Ramiro Ledesma and Onésimo Redondo. It was a form of extreme nationalism that sought to compete with the left and made use of street violence for political purposes, carried out by urban militias. It was characterised by nationalism (opposition to regional autonomy), the defence of Catholicism and virulent anti-communism. These elements, together with its eagerness to monopolise public life, made it a cousin to Italian Fascism and German Nazism and the third great fascist movement in 1930s Europe. The JONS would unite in 1934 with José Antonio Primo de Rivera's *Falange Española* to form a single party that was particularly sympathetic towards Mussolini's fascist movement.

The civil war would lead to the creation of the *Movimiento Nacional* [National Movement] which sought to establish itself as the only means for Spanish people to participate in public life. The *Falange Española* and JONS gave the *Movimiento* its political ideology.

For its part, the Society had been expelled from Spain at the beginning of the Second Republic in 1932. Article 26 of the 1931 Constitution stated: "They shall be dissolved those orders that statutorily impose, in addition to the three canonical vows, another of special obedience to any authority other than the legitimate State. Their assets will be nationalised and affected to charitable and educational ends."⁴³ It was clear that this was directly aimed

⁴² Lampomarda, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁴³ It can be consulted in <http://www1.icsi.berkeley.edu/~chema/republica/constitucion.html>, visited October 2017.

at the Society which was expelled by a decree of the Azaña government on January 23rd, 1932, which ordered its dissolution, granting a period of ten days for Jesuits to abandon ordinary religious life. Many left Spain and some remained as common clergy.

From that moment, the Society kept out of the public sphere in Spain. It returned to Spain following the victory of the nationalists, when Franco had already instituted a confessional dictatorship that firmly supported the Catholic Church. To properly deal with what happened afterwards would require a historical exercise that is beyond the remit of this text.

In any case, it may be worth recalling what the Church's position was in these circumstances. For this, we need not look further than Álvarez Bolado's study on this topic.⁴⁴ The Church maintained a quiet restraint in the first months of the war, due to the confusion triggered by the uprising on July 18th, 1936, and the uncertain outcome of the war. It would break its silence a few months later, on September 14th of that same year. Pope Pius XI, in an audience in Castelgandolfo with fugitive Spanish bishops, priests, members of religious orders and the faithful,⁴⁵ lamented the war becoming a civil affair, pitting brother against brother. In it he addressed the persecution of the Church and the Catholic religion. He believed that it was a sample of the threat to the existing social order at the time. He took the opportunity to bless the Catholic exiles who had gone to Italy.

The news that had been coming through to the Vatican until then reported violence specifically targeting priests and members of religious orders in the Republican territory. 3,000 were murdered in the months of July and August of 1936⁴⁶ out of a total of

⁴⁴ Cf. Álvarez Bolado, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ It can be consulted in Pius XI, "*La Vostra Presenza*", *Allocuzione di Sua Santità Pio Xi ai Vescovi, Sacerdoti, Religiosi e Fedeli profughi dalla Spagna*, 1936, in http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/it/speeches/documents/hf_p-xi_spe_19360914_vostra-presenza.pdf, visited in February 2017.

⁴⁶ Álvarez Bolado, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

6,832 murdered during the war, in a deliberate persecution, albeit not one backed by the Republican authorities. On August 7th in Madrid, the monument to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was blown up and the statue was shot at. On August 3rd, three bombs were thrown at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar, which did not explode, provoking a commitment from the nationalist side to give special protection to the Virgin.

At the outset of the civil war, bishops attributed the cause of the war to the de-Christianisation of Spain and characterised the conflict as a mission of re-Christianisation. Their declarations outlined this position until July 1st, 1937, the Cardinal Primate, Isidro Gomá, published the *Collective Letter of the Spanish Bishops in Relation to the War in Spain*. It stated that the war should be carried to its final conclusion, that only the triumph of the nationalist side could bring justice and peace and that the Church was on the nationalist side because it had been persecuted in an inconceivably inhumane and cruel manner. The National Movement's excesses were also mentioned, since "nobody defends themselves with full serenity from the wild attacks of a heartless enemy."⁴⁷ The Letter laid out the Church's position to an international audience, whereas previously it had been cautious to do so given the murder of 14 Basque priests by the rebels at the beginning of the struggle. The Letter gave immense international support to Franco's cause and aligned the Church with the national side.

This Letter was signed by almost the entire Spanish episcopate. The most notable exceptions were the Bishop of Vitoria, Mateo Múgica Urrestarazu, who had already been expelled from Spain, accused of spreading Basque nationalist propaganda and protecting Basque priests opposed to the uprising; and the Cardinal Archbishop of Tarragona, Francesc Vidal i Barraquer, who would end his days in exile for refusing to add his signature.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160 and 163.

In later years and already during the war, the Vatican would not be so accommodating of the Francoist regime, for two principal reasons. Firstly, the growing influence of Hitler's Germany in Spain was becoming apparent, given the possible signing of the Hispano-German Cultural Agreement in 1939. In Rome it was thought that this Agreement opened the door to Nazi ideological propaganda, which was pagan.⁴⁸ This set off alarm bells in the Holy See, which took action to prevent the Agreement from being approved. In the end it was not ratified. Secondly, Franco's wish to be given the right to present bishops to the Holy See for nomination led to a dispute and long negotiations, with the Holy See and the new government negotiating over the appointment of bishops.

In spite of this, following the death of Pius XI in February 1939, Pius XII was elected Pontiff and he issued a radio message to the Spanish faithful, in April of that same year, congratulating their victory in which God had crowned Christian heroism.⁴⁹ Spain remained in the eyes of the Pope an "invincible bulwark of the Catholic faith." The Spanish people "rose up in defence of the ideals of Christian faith and civilisation." He asked the new government and priests to enlighten the minds of the defeated, so that they would come to realise "the roots of materialism and secularism from which their errors and misfortunes grew." The Church would go on to be an ally of the Francoist regime for decades. At the end of the Franco regime the Church would play a decisive role in the democratic transition, especially through the guidance and dealings of Cardinal Tarancón.

Perhaps a lengthier discussion should have been included on the Society's stances during the four decades of Franco's fascist

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 435.

⁴⁹ It can be consulted in Pius XII, *Radiomensaje de Su Santidad Pío XII a los fieles de España*, 1939, in http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/es/speeches/1939/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19390416_inmenso-gozo.pdf, visited February 2017.

regime. That would have required information and historical depth beyond the reach of a text such as this, which focuses on the social apostolate of the Society as a whole.

4.5 The Protection of Jews during World War II

In occupied **Italy** there were many Jesuits who tried to help persecuted Jews. The most dedicated was Pietro Boetto, a Jesuit made cardinal in 1935 and archbishop of Genoa from 1938. He tried to protect the community in Liguria from destruction. From 1940 he tried to help Jews of Italian origin, as well as others from Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and in doing so saved many lives.

The Society, like other religious congregations, used their enclosed communities as sanctuaries to protect Jews. In Rome they were protected in the Oriental Institute, where Fr. Emil Herman SJ, its rector, prevented the SS from entering the community. When asked by the Gestapo why he had hidden the Jews, he replied: “for the same reason that we will soon have to hide you as well.”⁵⁰ In Frascati they also protected Jewish children, passing them off as altar boys. The International College of the Gesù also housed some Jews. Pietro Filippetto, a Jesuit in Milan, helped refugees cross the border into Switzerland, including some Jews. In Padua, Roncaglia Carlo Messori and Arturo Sala supported the use of the Antonianum Centre as a refuge. Their printing press was used to produce anti-Nazi literature. They both taught students to speak out against Nazism and fascism. There were also other cases.

The Society in Italy was not alone in these activities, and in other nations the same was happening of its own accord. In **Germany**, refuge was given to several hundred Jewish refugees who were hidden in the Society’s buildings in Munich. They were provided with clothes and food until they could be smuggled to Switzerland and France.

⁵⁰ Vincent Lapomarda, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

In **France**, de Lubac—a future cardinal—was convinced that the persecution of the Jews was tantamount to an attack on Christianity itself. In 1942 he wrote three essays in the magazine *Témoignage Chrétien* explaining that the Church could not tolerate anti-Semitic policies.⁵¹ In Lyon in August 1942, the Jesuit Chaillet rescued 120 Jewish children from deportation by the Nazis and was arrested and taken to prison as a result. With the help of the Archbishop of Lyon the children were able to reach Spain.

Also, the Jesuit Roger Braun, after becoming aware of the conditions of the Jewish prisoners in the Rivesaltes Camp in 1942, saved many of them from extermination, in collaboration with Jewish leaders. There are three other French Jesuits who participated in the resistance and who received the title of “Righteous Gentile”—which was also granted to Roger Braun—from the Government of Israel after the war, due to the help they gave to the Jews: Jean Fleury, Émile Planckaert and Henri Revol.⁵² They gave medical treatment to Jews in camps and hospitals and helped hide children. Also belonging to this category are Marcel Bith, Pierre Exbrayat and Louis Mouren, who likewise worked to protect Jews.

In **Poland**, where the active persecution of Catholic priests was intense, it became more difficult to protest against the Jewish persecution and offer them protection. However, there were several Jesuits involved in their defence, in particular Jerzy Mirewicz, who helped save seventeen Jewish people from being sent to Treblinka by organising documentation and transport to the Russian front, a safer place at the time.

Hungarian Jesuits also protected the Jews in their Sacred Heart residence in Budapest. Several Jesuits were involved, including Jacob Raile,⁵³ a brave man with good humour and a lot

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 281.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 189–190.

of ingenuity who risked his life in this endeavour. He managed to save some Jews by dressing them as priests when their property was stormed by Nazi sympathisers. They housed more than 180 people, among them about a hundred Jews and the remainder political refugees, and managed to feed them from the produce of a farm the Society maintained.

None of this was exclusive to the Society, and many other priests and members of religious orders made their convents and monasteries, houses and hospitals, schools and churches available for the protection of Jews.⁵⁴

If the Society stood out in its opposition to Nazism in Europe, in general terms, it also suffered at the hands of the Third Reich. By the end of the conflict in Europe, 83 Jesuits had been killed by the Nazis, 26 had died in captivity and 43 in concentration camps, the total figure reaching 152. Of them, a large number were Poles, but there were also Czechs, French, Yugoslavs, Austrians, Germans and Belgians.⁵⁵

4.6 An Irrepressible Cry for Human Dignity

After this tour through history it proves necessary to include some final considerations. As has been seen, the Church and the Society reacted to fascism in very diverse ways. It was difficult to appreciate the common elements between fascist movements in Italy, Germany and Spain. This was not readily apparent during those years. A clear understanding of their similarities and their nature only developed later, when they had already unleashed their terror. Hence, the response in each case was significantly different.

The initial ecclesial reaction was significantly influenced by fascism's firmly anti-communist position. The Church saw communism as a grave social and religious threat and wanted to put

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

⁵⁵ To see the names of these Jesuits, see Lampomarda, *op. cit.*, pp. 313–318.

a halt to the risk of social revolution, which was a concern at the time. States and the Church hierarchy identified this as the utmost danger. In fascism they saw a movement that could stand up to communism. Only later would they realise the danger that it brought. In turn, fascism came to power with the backing of a general public that had experienced great hardship. In those conditions it seemed impossible to expose political movements which had the support of and were endorsed by the masses. This support came in exchange for the promise of a restored dignity, which had been wounded in some countries after the Great War, as was the case in Germany.

At first, the main determining factor of the ecclesial position was the fascist regimes' treatment of the Church and its freedom. The ecclesial hierarchy found it difficult to focus on anything other than safeguarding its freedom as much as possible. This concern meant that other aspects of fascism went without notice, such as its disregard for human life, the exercise of violence, its radical nationalism and its marginalisation of certain social groups.

However, at the same time there were people who risked their lives and raised their voices to criticise the totalitarian exercise of power. A few Jesuits have been mentioned, but obviously there were also people from other religious and social backgrounds. They constituted a prophetic voice that spoke out in the name of moral integrity. They managed to speak in defence of inalienable values that protected human beings, though they knew that the conditions meant their stances would be unsuccessful. They had much to lose, as came to be realised. They felt the moral duty to not to give in to barbarism, which came at them with brute force and felled many of them. They died as martyrs. Their legacy is one of noble lives, testament to the greatness of the human heart, borne in the mortal bodies of defenceless people who suffered property seizures, persecution, imprisonment and extermination. They stood up when common sense told them to find a safe place to hide away.

The German Jesuits were the most determined in their protest. They defended the Church's independence, but also wanted to oppose a regime that was spreading terror. They were perceptive and brave. The leadership shown by the provincial Augustin Rösch deserves a special mention. He encouraged his fellow Jesuits who had dared to challenge the Hitler regime. He would even get them involved in clandestine activities that put their lives at stake. He believed that this was his duty as a provincial, furthering the mission of the Society at that moment in time. He knew that in doing so he was risking his own life, that of his companions and the very existence of the Society, but he did not hesitate to do what he thought was necessary until the end of the war. The assistance provided by this Superior was a great support for many.

The final word goes to the many Jesuit initiatives in European countries that sought to protect Jews, working together with many other people to do so. They did everything in their power under tragic circumstances. They were dedicated to saving people, in the most literal sense of the word. Many of them fell to Nazism and fascism, because they were identified as enemies of the nation. They swell the ranks of the martyrs of that era when all humanity was sacrificed in the name of an ideal.

This chapter has allowed us to see the Society and the Church's reaction to barbarism: its gradual realisation, its reaction and resistance, its ability to put its own life at stake to defend human dignity. At that time, a destructive and totalitarian ideology made it clear what type of social response was required to nourish the faith.

The next chapter will address the Society's second response to the situation of the working class, in the period following the Second World War. Its main contribution would be the creation of what came to be called the Workers' Mission.

Like the Leaven in the Mass: The Workers' Mission

The tumultuous years of the interwar period and the catastrophe of the Second World War gave way to a time of peace, decolonisation and stable economic growth. Eastern Europe fell under the red curtain of Soviet communism, while Western Europe slowly woke up from the nightmare of war and began a period of unprecedented prosperity. Industrial production increased, employment was abundant, economic surpluses multiplied, welfare states were slowly built and the exodus of people from the countryside to the city continued.

The economy grew, but the difficulties for the working class remained. Efforts continued within the Church and the Society to serve the workers, much in the same vein as those described in the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, save for the emergence of the worker priests which brought a new element to the table. Despite never reaching high numbers, they were very significant. They worked anonymously and in disguise in factories so as to live alongside workers and share their conditions, never showing themselves to be priests. They participated in workers' struggles and hardships. All their work was geared towards being present in a world where the Church had remained on the side-lines. They involved themselves with the working masses, like the leaven in the mass, to quietly bear the sign of the presence of the Christ: He being someone who likewise worked and suffered.

This chapter examines the historical origins of the Jesuit worker priests and explores the motivations that led them to live in a way that seemed to draw them away from their liturgical and ministerial responsibilities. It looks at the difficulties they experienced, the hierarchy's misunderstanding of them, and how they were gradually reintegrated, accepted and loved, thanks to the Second Vatican Council's theological evolution, among other things. It was during Fr. Arrupe's time as Superior that they felt truly welcomed by the institutional Society. By then, circumstances for the working classes were no longer the same and a deep transformation was underway. The world the worker priests had responded to had changed drastically. At that point, although many were getting older, they still found the inner vigour necessary to adapt to the new circumstances, still driven by the desire to live alongside the poor and the working classes and share their living conditions.

5.1 The Decay of Religious Faith in the Working World

In the middle of the nineteenth century the number of workers in the world was negligible, estimated at a few hundred thousand people. Only in Great Britain were the numbers more significant. They were mostly atomised and poorly organised.¹ However, the political potential of this minority would become evident in the following decades, as socialist movements gradually formed. At the turn of the century, unions, cooperatives and political groups proliferated, swelling the ranks of the revolutionary struggle and expressing firm opposition to religion. The triumph of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia renewed the hopes in most industrialised countries for the triumph of the socialist and communist movement.

The Church's efforts to organise the working masses did not progress to the same extent. In France in particular—a case well

¹ Cf. Hobsbawm, *op. cit.*, ch. 16.

studied—and to a different extent in other countries, there was a progressive abandonment of Catholicism, if not an active rejection. There was also resistance among ecclesial superiors to post priests to the working world. Jean-Claude Dhôtel recollected the testimony of a Jesuit at the end of the nineteenth century: “we cannot remain calm and listen to devout confessions, direct pious congregations or give academic lectures; we have to give ourselves to the masses... but we are no longer accustomed to going to the masses, because we are not allowed.”²

Also, these initiatives encountered active opposition within the Catholic community, to the point where it was prohibited to form Catholic working groups, as this was considered a form of collaboration with the Marxist class struggle, to which chaplains of Catholic trade unions would be actively contributing. In 1925, Fr. Achille Danset SJ, at that time deputy director of *Action Populaire* in Paris, wrote to Rome defending himself against such accusations and describing the situation in Northern France.³ He carefully detailed the state of affairs and described the praiseworthy dedication of members of the Church to the working class. The workers, however, were taking up ranks with the socialists and communists, to the point where Roubaix-Tourcoing, a region rooted in Catholic tradition, had become a de-Christianised area.

The phenomenon was not exclusive to this geographical area but spread wherever the working masses were found. In 1943, Henri Godin and Yvan Daniel, two Catholic priests, would write a book that marked a milestone, *France, pays de mission?* [France, a Missionary Country?], in which they noted the strong de-Christianisation of the working class in France, a process that already had a long history by then.

² Jean-Claude Dhôtel, *Les jésuites de France: Chemins actuels d'une tradition sans rivage*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1987, p. 63.

³ Cf. Paul Droulers, “La déchristianisation ouvrière en France dans le nord, à la fin du XIXe et au début du XXe siècles”, in *Cattolicesimo sociale nei secoli XIX e XX*, Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1982, pp. 347–360.

5.2 The Birth of a New Form of Apostolate

During the Second World War, many people were deported from occupied France. Christian communities were fearful for their fate, so they formed networks for material support. In the relief campaign, imprisoned priests became the natural intermediaries. They were used to distribute food, books and also liturgical objects. This movement grew following the enactment of the Compulsory Work Service in 1942, which meant workers from all over Europe were sent to Germany to contribute to the war effort of the Nazi military. In France, the Pétain government collaborated actively. More than half a million French workers were dispatched. This contingent of workers lived in labour camps and many of them died, which was a serious loss of human life for countries that were forced into this programme.

Among those workers there were also priests, as has been said. A few went voluntarily and undercover, sent there by their bishops. The best-known case was that of Fr. Henri Perrin SJ, who wrote a diary during his time in Germany, which received much acclaim when it was published after the war.⁴ Perrin was discovered and sent back to France, but others ended up in the Dachau concentration camp.

The pages of his diary describe the life of those men and their desire to bring God's news to those environments. Speaking about priests, he said: "they are witnesses of Christ and one would have wished them to radiate His strength and His peace. One would wish them in the thick of the fight, happy to take Him to the pagan masses, to watch over the souls needing protection or care."⁵ Referring to the effects that his presence had among the workers, he wrote: "the comrades realise that... we believe in

⁴ Henri Perrin, *Journal d'un prêtre ouvrier en Allemagne*, Paris, Seuil, 1945. Tens of thousands of copies of this book were sold.

⁵ Henri Perrin, *Itinerario de un sacerdote obrero*, Barcelona, Editorial Estela, 1967, p. 45

all this and we do not mean to subjugate them with our practices; Little by little they discover that these practices give us life and this is much better. More than one has come to confess how much he envies us, and to how much he also seeks an ideal.”⁶ He felt God’s presence: “Sometimes, at night, around me, the universe becomes tremendously close and familiar. Everything at peace, united, fused together and filled with a visible presence of God.”

Before being discovered by the Gestapo he organised “friendship groups”, small communities for workers to help each other.⁷ In that world of sorrowful and exploited workers, he discovered his love for them: “All around, there are workers... Sometimes they have gestures of men, a look, a movement, a behaviour, a smile... They have delicacies that are close to being a prayer. They cannot know how much I love them; and when, after having departed from them in the fresh dawn, when, with pressure at my temples and fingers trembling from the tiredness of night, I raise the host of Sacrifice, they do not know how much their life weighs heavily in my palms: all their sufferings of the night I would like to charge with God, like an electric battery is charged.”⁸

Once the war ended, the experience of those “worker priests” spread from France to other countries, such as the Netherlands and Belgium. Their numbers never exceeded 100. They lived as workers without distinguishing themselves openly from their colleagues. They received the blessing of Cardinal Suhard of Paris, who in 1941 founded the *Mission de France*. A good number of its seminarians became “worker priests”, who wanted to live alongside the workers.

Among these priests there were Jesuits, like the aforementioned Fr. Perrin, who discovered a “pagan land, one we must set out to clear of weeds.” He wanted priests to live “as workers, to continue

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁷ Entry “Perrin” in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*

⁸ Henri Perrin, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

the incarnation of Christ in the full human mass.”⁹ There was also Father Joseph de Lorgeril SJ,¹⁰ who worked in a factory full time, going to help his colleagues in difficulty or neighbours without accommodation. He made a private vow to be until his dying days, ““a poor man with the poor’, a worker with the workers”, understanding in this way these men’s profound motivations. This experience opened the door to a new form of priesthood.

In 1944 ten French Jesuits wrote to their provincials proposing the creation of “teams of worker missionaries”. The goal was to introduce Christ to the masses and, to this end, to live among them. Their request was accepted, and provincials began to send Jesuits on missions with the workers; in working class parishes, in Catholic Action groups, as labourers in factories or to be present alongside the poor. Thus, their work in parishes took on a pastoral form, be it social or educational. In some cases, they participated in secular groups, such as trade unions.

In 1947, Perrin began working in a factory along with two other Jesuits from *Action Populaire*. They also promoted socio-educational groups of workers in the Notre-Dame de la Gare neighbourhood in Paris.

The Society eventually had worker priests in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, as well as a few in Venezuela and Peru, all of them closely involved with worker priest groups in their respective countries.

5.3 A Testing Time

Many of these men stood out as organisers and not only participated in factory work, but also were involved in workers’ causes. They took part in strikes and worked with the leaders of workers’ movements.

⁹ Entry “Perrin” in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ Entry “Lorgeril” in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*

During a strike in March 1950, Perrin himself wrote a letter to Monsieur Cayeux (March 2nd), a member of the Popular Republican Movement,¹¹ in which he said among other things: "I cannot help but write to you to describe how the situation is developing in our strike. I have actively participated in it since February 22nd... I feel obliged to tell you, above all, that this strike seems to me to be profoundly just, necessary, strictly professional in its sources, as well as in its development... In this strike, the trade unions leaders are perfectly loyal and pursue objectives that are truly vindicated and professional. To use the term "political strike" is an odious slander. In this strike I accuse the employers... In such a situation, I find myself amazed by the attitude of a government that, instead of respecting the free encounter between the powers of workers and employers brought about by the unfreezing of wages, becomes a strike-breaker through the instructions and the support it gives to employers by various means."¹²

His position was not met with the understanding he expected from his superiors. On March 7th, a superior wrote to him: "All evidence points to the strike being prolonged and I suppose you will not reproach me for feeling a little uneasy: at this moment, more than ever, worker priests must refrain from the temptation to act as secular activists for the workers. Remain among the workers, by all means, and in communion with them, but as a priest, without trying to cover for the shortcomings of their activists, without taking on any temporary responsibility (trade unions, etc.)"¹³

This added to Perrin's difficulties, who did not have time for other tasks in the Society, given the intensity of the commitment required for the workers' cause. He felt a powerful call to that mission, like other worker priests, who could not resist becoming

¹¹ *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP), French non-denominational Christian Democrat party, founded in 1944, mainly built on Social Catholicism, Christian trade unionists and Catholic youth movements.

¹² Henri Perrin, *op. cit.*, pp. 202–203.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

definitively immersed in it. On the contrary, the Society conceived of it as a temporary experience. All this led to Fr. Perrin coming to a painful discernment, which led him to request his resignation from the Society in September 1951, shortly after finishing his Third Probation. He remained active as a priest, continuing with the vocation he had chosen before joining the Society. His case clearly showed that his exclusive dedication to the workers' domain was not compatible with the requirements demanded by his superiors.

Perrin would continue as a worker priest until his death in a motorcycle accident in 1954. He had participated in strikes at the Isère-Arc tunnel (1952-1953), in which he was Secretary of the Works Committee with a prominent role in the protection of workers. His story is a good example of the difficulties that these men faced in sustaining the mission to which they felt called.

The worker priests were not only confronted individually, but in November 1953, at the behest of Pius XII, the French bishops reduced the working hours of priests in factories to three. They were asked to behave like priests, because it was felt they were desacralising their ministry. This provoked deep disappointment and a crisis among worker priests. Perrin wrote in November 1953: "things like asking us to work for just a few hours a day, asking us to step back from the labour and trade union movement, asking us to maintain certain ties within the parish, is to ignore the reality of the basic conditions of our lives as workers, of an authentic working life."¹⁴

For the ecclesial authorities preceding the Second Vatican Council, it was almost impossible to understand their experience. The conception of priesthood as a strictly spiritual activity and the fear of workers' organisations and their Marxist elements made it impossible to perceive the value and importance of this endeavour. Added to this was the broad indifference of Catholics

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

towards the workers' struggle to achieve an equitable distribution of assets and power.¹⁵ Some of the worker priests would continue to work in the factories, even running the risk of excommunication, because they saw abandoning their commitment as tantamount to betraying the poor.¹⁶ A few years later, in 1959, the Holy Office asked the Archbishop of Paris to gradually and prudently end that activity.

The General Superior of the Society of Jesus at the time, Fr. Janssens, significantly promoted the social apostolate by different means, laid out in explicit terms in his "Instruction on the Social Apostolate"¹⁷ (1949). It detailed the difficult situation faced by the workers and proposed ways to remedy their situation, such as visiting them at home to get to know their living conditions (No. 15), creating schools for them (No. 22), offering them Spiritual Exercises (No. 20, citing the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1941), respect, consideration and love (No. 26). However, there was no mention of the worker priests. In 1953 orders came from Rome that the experiment of working in factories was to end. The faith of all those men who felt a powerful calling to embody Christ in workshops and companies was severely tested. Some were given pastoral work, while hoping to be able to resume their ministry among workers.

5.4 The Resumption of Worker Initiatives

In 1962 Fr. Jacques Sommet SJ wrote a letter to the French Bishops explaining why the Society supported the Workers' Mission. In it he expressed that it was typical of the Society to send its members to difficult situations where the spiritual needs were

¹⁵ Pedro Uriarte, *Sacerdote y Misión Obrera*, Bilbao, Mensajero, 1967, p. 30.

¹⁶ Perrin, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

¹⁷ TN: For an English Language version see <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/other-documents/1949/>.

more urgent. These were the conditions in the working world. He pointed out that the Society felt itself summoned to accompany the workers and, by sharing lives and becoming close to them, to give their lives Christian meaning. Their Jesuit tradition moved them to set their sights, simultaneously, on the poorest people and those with the greatest responsibility, with equal dedication. Hence the need to participate, as they did, in the lives of the workers, in addition to mixing with intellectuals and government officials. And he ended by saying: “In France, the Society has contributed to the Hierarchy’s apostolic concerns for the workers’ world as these began: at the start of the JOC and the JOCF, in the founding of the LOC,¹⁸ in sending priests to work in Germany, in the worker-priest experiences until 1954, in the Houses for Young Workers ... as well as in other ways, for example, the first activities of Action Populaire. The Society plans to continue this work in the new form that worker-priests offer.”¹⁹

The French bishops posted fifty priests to factories, specifying a number of characteristics on how they should live, so as to guarantee the spiritual dimension of their immersion in the working world. There were five Jesuits within that number: three in the Paris region and two in Le Mans.

Thanks to the impetus of Fr. Sommet in France, the Jesuits resumed their initiatives with workers, developing this during the pontificate of Paul VI. It would be called the *Workers’ Mission*. They would be accompanied by other Jesuit companions in Spain, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Italy.

The Second Vatican Council would rehabilitate this option, acknowledging the way of life of these men, placing it alongside the many ways in which priests embodied their priestly ministry:

¹⁸ TN: JOC = Young Christian Workers (YCW); JOCF = Young Women Christian Workers (YWCW); LOC = Christian Workers League (CWL)

¹⁹ Noël Barré, “History of the Jesuit Workers’ Mission”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 75, 2001, 49–59, p. 51.

“All priests are sent as co-workers in the same apostolate, whether they engage in parochial or extra-parochial ministry. This is true whether they devote their efforts to scientific research or teaching, or whether *by manual labour they share in the lot of the workers themselves*—if there is need for this and competent authority approves—or *finally whether they fulfil some other apostolic tasks or labour designed for the apostolate.*”²⁰

The 70s saw the largest number of Jesuit workers trained and posted. In 1977 there were more than 40 Jesuit workers in France, some living in isolation and others in small groups. They were mainly in Paris, Toulouse, Marseille and Amiens. They were coordinated at a national level and published a bi-monthly newsletter, *Lettre des Jésuites in Mission Ouvrière*, in which they addressed the issues in the working world.²¹ In Italy worker priests met diligently, inviting Jesuits from related areas or ones in training to discuss topics such as economic and trade union issues, politics and the participation of workers. There was a dozen of them in places like Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Campania and Sicily. They had their own publication, *Fogli dei gesuiti in missione operaia/popolare* [Paper on Jesuits in the Workers'/Popular Mission].²² In Catholic Nationalist Spain they chose to live alongside workers, choosing to work for the minimum wage, to participate in trade union life and to foster links with working-class organisers. Often their activities were clandestine, which led to arrests, painful abandonment and misunderstandings. They paid a price for their option for the poorest people. They also had their own organ of communication, the *Boletín de Misión Obrera* [Workers' Mission Bulletin].

²⁰ Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* on the ministry and life of priests, No. 8. The italics are the author's.

²¹ “Sacerdotes obreros en Francia” in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 3, 1977, p. 68.

²² “Sacerdotes obreros en Italia”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 6, 1978, pp. 32–33.

Fr. Arrupe asked Fr. Jean Lacan SJ to encourage communication among these companions. Thus, connections began to be made between Workers' Mission communities in different countries, which helped strengthen the identity of their vocation and fostered greater enthusiasm, energy and resilience among Jesuits who were operating in environments where it was often difficult to share their experience of faith.

5.5 Inspired by Mysticism

A profound mysticism inspired the worker priests from the outset of the ministry. Already the first priests who voluntarily went to Germany during the Second World War aspired to embody Jesus, to make Christ himself present among the people forced to work in the war machine. Their steadfastness and their willingness to risk deportation or being sent to concentration camps were early signs of the mysticism that inspired them to be with the Crucified Christ among the masses forced to collaborate with the enemy.

Experiencing this mysticism was not only essential to begin this apostolate, but also to remain in it. Fr. Perrin, who was the spark for an entire generation, gave a glimpse in his diary of the spirit required to carry on the mission: “the only Christian in the heathen mass... far from wallowing in the worries of exile, my heart leaps with joy and gratitude. Lord, you have placed us in a foreign land, so that in it we may be You... These men without God are in our hands, poor human things that need friendship and light... They need to see, finally, a Christian among them... one who does not think like everyone and whose deeds are so often the sign and witness of another world, another land where life is happier and there is belief in something, because the person is no longer alone. We have seen their surprise and admiration when they came to know our prayer, our friendship, our faith.”²³

²³ Perrin, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

In the experience of incarnation, the worker priests shared the sufferings, miseries and hopes of the labouring class. Side-by-side they experienced the value of a poor life and of fraternity, participated in struggles for their rights and contributed in relief societies that had been established. They abandoned their privileged status to become members of the working world.²⁴

In turn, being present in this sphere nourished them both humanly and spiritually. In the working world they saw a movement fostering human and social values, among them freedom, solidarity and justice, and the desire for a world of increased material living standards and equitable distribution.²⁵ They had more hope in the workers than in the majority of Catholics who did not share the desire for an equitable distribution of assets and power in society; one which would allow the true development of the human person.²⁶

However, the author who best captured the mystical experience of the labour environment was the Belgian Égide van Broeckhoven SJ. He was born in 1933, entered the Society in 1950 and was ordained a priest in 1964. From 1965 he was employed as a Jesuit worker in four different companies, pausing only to carry out his Third Probation. In December 1967 he died in a work accident, barely 34 years of age. He left his diaries in which his personal journey, a spiritual, mystical process, can be read.²⁷

In keeping with a mission that consists in accompanying real human beings and becoming one of them, Égide developed a

²⁴ Pedro Uriarte, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁷ They are collected in Égide van Broeckhoven, *Journal de l'amitié*, Bruxelles, Lumen Vitae / Foyer Notre Dame, 1972, and Égide van Broeckhoven, *Journal spirituel d'un Jésuite en usine. Du temps des études au temps du travail*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1976. The few references included here come from Josep M. Rambla Blanch, *Dios, la amistad y los pobres*, Santander, Sal Terrae, 2007.

mysticism of encounter and friendship: “When love is expressed in a real way through a commitment in a real situation to the loved person... only then is love truly authentic, existential: deep, without limits; expanded beyond time, eternal; beyond matter, spiritual.”²⁸ His spiritual diary is full of references to real encounters, dialogue and visits to ordinary working families where he senses the appreciation he feels for these people. It is about “seeking others in God, and God in others.”²⁹

His spiritual diary reflects a reading of life through the lens of a radical belief, in which daily events are interspersed with reflections that spring from a heart full of faith. “My spirituality can be defined like this: ... let God’s life circulate through me into others.”³⁰

The path of embodiment led him to share the fate of those less fortunate whatever the consequences. In the end he suffered a workplace accident and died in a factory, like other workers, ending a brief life of one who knew how to see the transparency of God in the darkness of the working world. He remains a testament to the spiritual depth that can be reached in a vocation in the Workers’ Mission.

5.6 The Eagerly Awaited Support from the Society as an Institution

There was no explicit mention of the Workers’ Mission in the fourth decree of General Congregation 32 (1975), but the Jesuits involved in the field could see that their work had been integrated in numbers 49 and 50. In these paragraphs, the Congregation expressed the need for “a larger number of us to share more closely the lot of families who are of modest means, who make up the

²⁸ Rambla, *op. cit.*, 109.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

majority of every country, and who are often poor and oppressed... Then we will learn to make our own their concerns as well as their preoccupations and their hopes. Only in this way will our solidarity with the poor gradually become a reality... If we have the patience and the humility and the courage to walk with the poor, we will learn from what they have to teach us what we can do to help them... Through such humble service, we will have the opportunity to help them find, at the heart of their problems and their struggles, Jesus Christ living and acting through the power of the Spirit. Thus, can we speak to them of God our Father..."

A few years later, in 1980, Fr. Arrupe summoned Jean Lacan and fifteen other Jesuit workers to Rome to listen to them and to dialogue with them.³¹ After this meeting, the Fr. General sent a letter addressed to the entire Society about the Workers' Mission. In this letter Arrupe affirmed that the Workers' Mission was a form of apostolate in the Society, and the latter would support, direct and take responsibility for it (No. 4). He situated the Mission within the Ignatian "service of the souls", because of its concern for "the vast masses of men and women in the working world, in special need of understanding, promotion and evangelisation" (No. 5). He recognised that at times it had been distanced and neglected (No. 3). He considered that it was a mission at the frontiers, which acted as a bridgehead to a reality on which the Society must reflect. The Society needed to integrate this experience in its reflection and discernment (No. 7). The Workers' Mission was a reference point for the whole of the Society (No. 12). Fr. Arrupe understood how it responded to the Ignatian criteria for the selection of ministries, as it was addressing situations of great need involving huge numbers of people (Nos. 8-9).

³¹ The rich dialogue between the Fr. General and these Jesuits, as well as a presentation of the lives of each one of them, are gathered in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 16, 1980.

Arrupe expressed his personal empathy towards the worker Jesuits when he told them that “It is an apostolate which in many countries is counted among those where ‘it is seen that there are not others to attend to them.’ (Const. 623) For this reason it should be preferred by the Society. What can I say to you about abandonment when I see you each day alone, like drops in the ocean, left more to your own fate than perhaps my own responsibility or that of your immediate superiors should allow?” (No. 11). He considered it a “very difficult” apostolate and questioned rhetorically whether the Church and the Society should not be doing much more for it.

Fr. Arrupe reaffirmed their option by indicating that “full insertion in the working class” was required, in such a way that the “place and type of dwelling, disposal of working day and life-style in general must be as far as possible the same as those of the people among whom one works... The worker Jesuit is like the gospel leaven which cannot ferment the mass unless it is mixed and dissolved into it” (No. 15).

He would ask the worker priests to remain in constant contact with the Hierarchy and Superiors, since they were not “there on their own responsibility” (No. 19). It was a mission and not a self-destination. He asked them to undergo rigorous training, to have the humility to refrain from comparing themselves with other companions, and not to succumb to ideological radicalisation. He warned them about the risks and cautioned them on the limits of Jesuit’s socio-political commitment (No. 24). Finally, he requested them to pay attention to the religious and spiritual dimension (No. 22).

In 1986, during the generalate of Fr. Kolvenbach, a new meeting of the Workers’ Mission was convened in Lanzo, near Turin. 75 European Jesuits participated, not only worker priests, but also others engaged in pastoral work among workers and as well as others dedicated to the “fourth world” or poor immigrants. There were also some Jesuits in formation. At that time, this spectrum

better represented the diverse manifestations of the Workers' Mission than the small nucleus of Jesuit workers. The General participated periodically in the meeting³² and gave an address to the Jesuits present there.³³

In his speech, the General told the attendees that they were the "most important and most visible representatives" of the promotion of justice. He asked them to be faithful to their initial intuition which was "to live at the heart of the workers' world and among the poorest, to open yourselves up by living among them, by sharing, by solidarity with them." The meaning of the Workers' Mission was to "be with, live with, and share the life, the living conditions, financial uncertainty, exploitation and insecurity."

In the context of the transformation of the workers' situation that was already apparent in the 80s, and in response to the movements that were already appearing within the Workers' Mission, the General encouraged the Jesuits in attendance to continue searching for the new poor. He mentioned the need to also go to "places [other] than the working and popular environment: the foreigner, the fourth world, the excluded and marginalised, those abandoned even by the trade unions themselves." He invited them to continue with the discernment of where to offer their service according to the "needs of the neighbourhood and the limitations and qualities of each one."

This brought to an end the Mission's journey towards recognition in the Society, following a history marked by the dualistic attitude maintained by the Church and the Society. On the one hand, they perceived the need to act in the face of religious

³² Some of the personal impressions of those attending the meeting are gathered in "Reunión de Jesuitas obreros, sacerdotes-obreros", *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 34, 1986, pp. 20–25.

³³ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "A la reunión de la Misión Obrera europea, sobre la fidelidad a la intuición inicial (Lanzo, Turín, 2 de Agosto de 1986)", in *Selección de escritos del P. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach (1983–1990)*, Madrid, Provincia de España de la Compañía de Jesús, 1990, pp. 513–519.

desertion among working people, distant and forgotten by the Church. On the other, they found it difficult to accept the way in which this mission was developed by priests, due to their excessively secular approach and their participation in workers' causes. Forty years later, after many trials and tribulations, the value of the commitment could be better and more holistically understood.

5.7 Changes to Working Conditions

As has been indicated, the worker priest experiment was developed mainly in Europe and during the post-war period. Those decades prior to the economic crisis in the 70s saw the most inclusive economic progress in the history of Europe. At the time, European politicians tried everything in their powers to forget the traumatic scenes of the 30s and the deep economic crisis that had particularly harmed the working classes. Many families lost their jobs and fell into misery and despair. The poverty and the inequality that spread kindled the fires of revolution and nationalism, stretching the social fabric to breaking point. Nations responded differently in each context. Eventually the National Socialist horror took shape and the danger of war loomed, until it became a reality, unleashing the greatest destruction history has ever seen. At the end of the war, European politics was left scarred and searching for an escape route from this diabolical scenario.

Hence, as the end of the Second World War drew nigh, the great political concern turned to preventing such an explosive situation from ever recurring, by avoiding the conditions that had led to the conflict. European societies shifted to the left in their political tendencies. More than ever, economic liberalism was under threat. Its recurring crises and their capacity to jeopardise the social fabric were an existential risk for countries. They responded with a series of political measures to radically transform the social context. Welfare states were formed, alongside guarantees and protections for workers. States intervened to limit the

excesses of capital which had caused so much damage in the interwar period, particularly in the wake of the 1929 crisis. They regulated and closely observed market behaviour. Trade unions grew stronger, enjoying negotiating powers that they had not previously had. Wages and working conditions improved. The middle class grew, while inequality and the number of people in chronic poverty decreased.

This period is known in France as *Les Trente Glorieuses*, a period of growth that began at the end of the Second World War and ended with the 1973 oil crisis. This also coincided with years which saw worker priests employed in factories, where conditions were gradually transforming. In the late 70s, this long period of growth was coming to an end. The ensuing economic crisis caused industrial unemployment that became even more acute in the 80s. It was the end of an era. Trade unions lost the bargaining power they had enjoyed until then. States blamed them for preventing growth, accusing them of being a hindrance to a favourable environment for business investment. President Carter in the United States was the first in confronting them and other Western politicians followed suit.

This created a favourable environment for the birth of the so-called *Washington Consensus*, a series of measures initially promoted by the governments of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States, which definitively changed the roadmap to economic development. Markets were deregulated, states shrunk through the privatisation of national companies, national tariffs were repealed to favour international trade, and a golden era began for the development of large multinationals and the relocation of companies. In 1987 Margaret Thatcher would go on to say that there was no such thing as society, only individual men and women.³⁴ Each person had to take charge of their own

³⁴ "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families", Margaret Thatcher in an interview *Women's Own Magazine*, on October 31, 1987.

life and they were solely responsible for what they made of it. This mentality, which was spreading rapidly, was plunging the poorest people into increasing vulnerability.

The world of work would change. The solidarity and activism that had characterised previous decades became less of a concern, as the middle class expanded and living conditions became less precarious. Some blamed consumerism and individualism for the weakening of class consciousness. The fall of the Berlin Wall dealt a definitive blow to communist parties and the dream of a new, fairer and more equitable society vanished. Francis Fukuyama published his book “The End of History”³⁵ in 1992, in which he argued that liberal capitalism was the future; there was no other possible option. The death knell sounded for the revolutionary dream and communist aspirations, which now appeared impossible to realise. With their passing, labour organising became deflated.

This new situation, which would be moulded and become entrenched with the passing of time, affected the Workers’ Mission. New production methods were developed and manual work, already by then remarkably transformed by new technologies, gradually disappeared. Many retired Jesuit workers became involved with the unemployed. They also began to work directly for the poor in the Third World, sometimes creating solidarity groups with them, on other occasions relocating themselves to countries in the Global South. There was an increasing interest in spirituality. The Workers’ Mission annually organised Ignatian Exercises in Lamiarrita, Navarra. The group *Vie Ouvrière et Vie Religieuse Ignatienne* [Worker’s Life and Ignatian Religious Life] organised beginners’ courses in prayer and discernment. International meetings were held on the topic of social action from the perspective of belief. In Berlin, the Jesuit Christian Herwartz would carry out

³⁵ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York, 1992.

the Exercises on the streets. The numbers of foreign workers multiplied, a new category of worker shackled by precariousness, and many Jesuits would dedicate themselves to serving this group.

All these facts led to a diminishing interest in young Jesuits to join the Workers' Mission, since they found a greater meaning and affinity with their vocation in directly serving the marginalised and in collaborating with NGOs. Making a class-motivated option became hard to imagine, because the very concept had seen its historical capacity to mobilise diluted.

The transformation experienced in the world of work had a critical effect on the Workers' Mission in the European countries where it had been developed. There continued to be a personal sense of belonging to the Workers' Mission among Jesuits who remained loyal to their lifework, but the organisation plateaued. However, the initial intuition lives on; the desire to be present alongside the poor and live like them, taking part in social initiatives for human development where the Church does not play a leading role.

5.8 Loyalty to a Vocation

As this chapter comes to a close, some conclusions may be drawn. The Workers' Mission was a true personal call to work and live with the labouring class. Jesuit workers experienced a particular calling to a vocation to which they felt they had to respond. It was not a partial or temporary commitment, but an option that consumed their entire lives. Most of them adopted this mission as a way of life that shaped their religious vocation. They remained devoted to it over the long course of their lives. Although their way of life had greatly different characteristics to those of most fellow Jesuits, they stayed on their path until their dying days. Theirs was a true vocation within the Jesuit vocation itself, a call that came from God and to which they

responded in a faithful, diligent and complete manner. Even as they reached retirement age they remained in their local neighbourhoods and did not change their life-styles. On the contrary, it made them continue looking for new ways to be close to the working class, to be active in their struggles and committed to them. If loyalty is one of the proofs of the authenticity of God's calling, then the Jesuit workers have given sufficient evidence that God called them constantly over many years.

The first concern of these men was to share life with the workers, to live with them, to experience their sufferings and to commit themselves in their struggles. Clearly, they lived a more secularised life than their fellow Jesuits dedicated to spiritual or liturgical tasks. They did not prioritise traditional spiritual ministries; indeed, sometimes they were not able to be open about their religious status or the fact that they were priests. However, their lives were deeply imbued with the spirituality of the Incarnation. The context in which they found themselves required them to constantly renew their dual vocation: to the Jesuit body and to the working class. This was a fruitful tension, but like all tensions, it was a complicated one to cope with and always required discernment.

They developed a true mysticism, because they needed this as sustenance to nourish them in their option, to ground and motivate them. Because in this way they could make sense of, from a faith perspective, a secularised reality resistant to the language of believers, far removed from religious spaces and ways of thinking. In it they discovered the God of life who is present among the least in society and who is happy to be with them. Because only in this way could they respond with courage and creativity to the constant challenges of their reality and the recurrent misunderstandings between their companions and Superiors. The Jesuit workers were followers of the Spirit in difficult circumstances. Their tremendously demanding apostolate forced them to constantly step outside themselves and to drink from the well of faith in Jesus Christ, friend of the poor.

Fate bound most of them to make serious discernments about their lives and their vocations. They came under pressure to abandon the vocation in which they made themselves nobodies. They did not enjoy the spotlight like other companions; they did not enjoy friendships with influential people; they did not have big institutional power and support. They chose a lowly life shared with lowly people, and for many of them this option was for life. Their greatness was in the mystery of their simplicity. This was not a mere product of nature or coincidence, but the result of contemplating on the poor and humble Jesus of the Gospel; and of continuous discernment, ever fraught with testing moments, of the values to be sustained in life, in their commitments and in their loyalties.

As has been seen, they faced ever mounting tests, because the Church and their Superiors were suspicious of this option. They were seen as disobedient, because it appeared as if they only had time to dedicate themselves to their mission and were not available for other tasks. On the other hand, the theology of that period, prior to the Second Vatican Council, was not capable of understanding why a priest, the servant of the spiritual dimension, would devote himself full-time to secular tasks. The hierarchy adopted a cautious attitude, preferring to put the experiment to the test before allowing others to follow the same path.

The lack of understanding and the difficulties those men encountered surely must have dented their resolve, causing them to return again and again to their initial option, purifying their intentions and renewing their faithfulness. Most of them were—or continue to be—people of great humanity and empathy, ordinary and approachable, convinced and courageous. Maybe that was one of the fruits of having to overcome so many tests.

They also experienced much temptation. The temptation to abandon the priesthood to focus on serving the working world. That would have alleviated many of their worries. In fact, many

did abandon religious life. The temptation to criticise the Jesuit body and to scorn it for being tame and not very radical. In essence, the temptation of pride. But they also overcame that. In fact, these men demonstrated great affection for the Society. In reality, their presence within the apostolic body made a great contribution to the gradual transformation of how the Society interprets reality and conceptualises the Jesuit vocation today. As the working world was transformed, they also felt the temptation to deny the new reality, which barely acknowledged the efforts of so many people who fought for their rights over the years to bring about this transformation. These people are owed a debt of gratitude for a good part of the rights that today protect us all. Nor did they yield to the temptation of bitterness, but simply adapted to the new times, updating their initial vocation to new circumstances.

They learned, therefore, to change and adapt, while remaining committed to the poor. Once more they showed joy and hope. When the circumstances of the working world changed, they dedicated themselves to immigrants, to the excluded fourth world, to vitalising community life, to going to the frontiers to poor slums in developing countries. The Society owes a lot to them for the renovation it has experienced in recent decades.

These men, workers and mystics, witnesses of the God of life, friend of the poor, gave thanks to Fr. Arrupe for taking them in, for understanding and reintegrating them and granting them the place they deserved within the Society. Today there are no new vocations in the working world, as there were in the past. But the legacy lives on in the commitment to faith and justice and in the desire of some Jesuits to serve and live like the poor.

Consolidation

After a long journey of preparation, the social apostolate consolidated within the Society of Jesus, after the election of Fr. Janssens as General of the Society in 1946. Many years had passed since the publication of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and social action was finding its place among the Jesuit ministries. But Fr. Janssens would promote it with determination, requesting the creation of social centres, that is, apostolic institutions that serve social issues, in all provinces. He considered this activity a higher form of charity, and one that had a multiplier effect.

Thanks to Fr. Janssens, social centres would proliferate, right up to the present day, as institutions of the social apostolate. He would have a marked influence, as during his generalate there was a large increase in the number of Jesuits. They received their formation in a Society where the social apostolate was becoming increasingly important.

Father Arrupe, Janssens' successor as head of the Society, would devote much energy to strengthening this apostolate. He convoked General Congregation 32 (1975) in which the Society's mission was defined as "service of faith and promotion of justice". From then on, Arrupe concentrated much of his efforts on making the promotion of justice a defining characteristic of all the Society's works and of each individual Jesuit. Social matters ceased to be conceived as the exclusive task of the social apostolate, becoming the responsibility of the Society at large. Arrupe located the promotion of justice, inseparable from the faith, at the

centre of the Society's mission. In this way he gave impetus to the social apostolate and the commitment of all Jesuits to the poor and the promotion of justice.

This second part closely tracks the Society's redirection towards social matters thanks to these two Fr. Generals. In their time, social centres were consolidated and the service to the poor was complemented with the promotion of justice. The last chapter of this section is dedicated to an exploration of the nuances given to this mission by subsequent General Congregations.

The Greater Good of Social Action: Social Centres

It has been seen in previous chapters how the Ignatian impetus to serve the poor was adapted to new circumstances brought about by the dual political and economic revolution that transformed Western societies from the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Society's responses were very varied. Some were palliative, trying to meet the needs of workers, identified as the new poor. Others were spiritual, offering faith to a group at the peripheries of the Church's focus. Efforts were also made to organise workers into trade unions and cooperatives, as a bulwark against class struggle, which was perceived as a serious threat. Likewise, they sought avenues into the daily lives of workers, through the worker priest initiatives, to share their cause and their lot.

But the Society also tried to provide institutional responses. Very soon social centres were established to spread the Social Doctrine of the Church; they reflected on the current situation, trained workers, lay people and the priests themselves and presented alternatives to a capitalist world that was generating so much suffering among the workers. *Action Populaire*¹ was a successful model that could be replicated in other parts of the world. These centres were established under different guises.

¹ Social centre in France led by Fr. Desbuquois. It has been talked about in Chapter 3 on the challenge of labour.

They were not oriented towards “social relief”, for which other initiatives already existed, but towards “social transformation”. They were seeking the greater good. They aspired to transform social structures that would in turn generate a change in workers’ living conditions.

The reflection that gave rise to the formation of these centres can be traced back to the beginnings of the social apostolate. It originated in the socially conscious Encyclicals to which various Jesuits contributed. Several General Congregations confirmed this position, thereby indicating the way forward. For their part, the Fr. Generals stood out by giving impetus to the guidelines indicated by the Congregations.

This chapter will give a summary of how this social reflection evolved in the legislative work of the Congregations and in the teachings of Fr. General Janssens. It does not encompass the generalate of Fr. Arrupe, since, given his importance, he will have the following chapter entirely dedicated to him. There will be space given to look at the ever-deepening understanding that choosing to work for the greatest good leads to actions that generate social transformation. Charity gives way to transformation. This is how social centres came into existence, a true institutional innovation that sought to promote social change through a variety of actions.

Already in Ledóchowski’s time, these centres were promoted by the Society’s Government. Later with Janssens, not only would they find support, but the conviction of a General who had no hesitation in facing down resistance among provinces and provincials to their establishment. His “Instruction on the Social Apostolate” (1949) and his subsequent interventions would mark a fundamental milestone in strengthening the social apostolate and the social centres. In addition, given that during his generalate the Society experienced remarkable growth, his teachings would leave a decisive mark on a new generation of Jesuits, who would go on to have a strong influence in following decades.

The Society's reorientation towards social matters found one of its strongest driving forces in the government of this General.

This chapter also includes a long list of social centres founded up until Fr. Arrupe's time. Actually, these were just some of the most important ones. With them the Society began a new institutional engagement that would add to the variety of its ministries and give them a more specifically social profile.

The social centres are very varied depending on their focus, and the geographical and historical circumstances in which they were founded. At different times, efforts have been made to specify their key defining characteristics. Therefore, some of the features that distinguish them are mentioned at the end. The chapter closes by drawing some conclusions.

6.1 The Adoption of the Social Apostolate by the General Congregations

General Congregation 24 (1892), in which Fr. Luis Martín was elected General, was celebrated one year after the publication of RN, and its Decree 20² contained a brief recommendation regarding serving workers, in which it was requested that groups of workers be convened to promote education and development. It advised that they be given Spiritual Exercises and proposed that other groups of lay people accompanied by Jesuits should direct workers towards pious and charitable organisations. It warned Jesuits not to get involved in economic management or to interfere in political matters. As can be seen, at the time there was essentially a desire to promote the evangelising mission among the workers.

The next General Congregation that dealt with this apostolic engagement was *GC 27* (1923), convoked by the Superior General

² It can be consulted in Padberg, O'Keefe y McCarthy, *op. cit.*, p. 487.

Fr. Ledóchowski to discuss affairs.³ Decree 29 would say that “Social works... which are so urgently recommended by the Church, can be promoted by Ours in accord with the institute, provided that those norms are observed that the superior general has prescribed.”⁴

In 1931, forty years after *Rerum Novarum* (RN), Pope Pius XI would publish a new social encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*⁵ (QA). Several Jesuits played a prominent role in its drafting. Fr. Oswald von Nell-Breuning SJ was the main contributor, at the request of Fr. Ledóchowski, who in turn had been entrusted by Pius XI himself. Nell-Breuning would rely on the school of thought called “Solidarism”, which had been initiated by Fr. Heinrich Pesch SJ. He had sought a third way between liberalism and socialism, which he called “Solidarism”. This theory privileged public over private welfare, basing economic organisation on solidarity through a social system of work. Successive drafts of the Encyclical involved the participation of the French Jesuit, Fr. Desbuquois, and the Belgian Jesuit, Fr. Albert Muller, who was in charge of amalgamating the drafts received from Nell-Breuning and Desbuquois. From this final compilation, the finished wording of the document emerged.

The Encyclical recognised that the Church had an important role to play in contributing to the dismantling of the liberal state—deeply criticised at that time—and favoured the progressive intervention of the state in the field of economics and the proliferation of associations. The text denounced the severe inequalities produced by the Industrial Revolution due to the nonexistence or ineffectiveness of policies of distribution, within a scenario where the resources of capital were being hoarded. It would allude to

³ A General Congregation can be convoked, either to elect of a new General, or to deal with affairs. In this instance there was no election.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 573.

⁵ It can be consulted in http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anNo.html, visited in February 2017.

the need for social justice,⁶ an ethical principle that regulates the equitable distribution of resources.

QA's criticism of communism was direct, condemning its atheism—"enemy... to Holy Church and to God Himself"—which it described as "impious and iniquitous" (QA 112). Socialism received a more nuanced treatment, given that it renounced the use of violence and adopted a milder conception of class struggle. In any case, socialism was considered incompatible with Christianity: "no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true socialist" (QA 120), due to socialism's denial of the transcendence of the human being.

The Encyclical Letter considered it necessary to reform the state, associations and the market model. It attributed a greater role to the state, which had to direct, watch, urge and restrain (QA 80). It favoured the corporate model, where society is organised around certain types of activities in which employers and workers collaborate. Finally, it opposed a market free of regulations that was held tightly in the grip of economic powers, without any specific care for the common good. It indicated that the economy had to be subordinate to the principle of social justice and social charity (QA 88).

All these considerations demonstrate the significant influence of the Society's internal reflections prior to the formation of the Church's Social Doctrine in those years.

With war on the horizon, Father Ledóchowski himself convoked the *General Congregation 28* (1938) again to discuss affairs. On this occasion, Decree 29 dedicated several paragraphs to the "social apostolate".⁷ It was the first Congregation in history to specifically deal with this apostolate. In the aforementioned decree the fruitful results of social works were acknowledged,

⁶ This is the first time that this term appeared in a social encyclical.

⁷ Paragraphs 5 to 16, they can be consulted in Padberg, O'Keefe y McCarthy, pp. 606–607.

and they were recommended as very suitable to the Society. It requested that they be supported with particular urgency (D. 29, No. 5). It also demanded the advancement of the religious, moral and even temporal wellbeing of the workers. It reiterated the importance of giving them Spiritual Exercises and of communicating the Social Doctrine of the Church to them and called for the promotion of social institutes and trade unions (Nos. 6-7).

A new theme incorporated into this decree was the request for Jesuits to go to the peripheries of big cities, where there was a dearth of religious services, to establish missions. Once the area was being served by the dioceses, they should depart (No. 8). Likewise, the principles of social justice and social charity had to be adopted by students in the Society's educational institutes (No. 9). It requested that Jesuits be aware of the fundamental elements of the Social Doctrine of the Church (No. 10).

The same decree used war-like imagery to urge the combating of communism: "zealously attempt to clearly expose the internal errors of atheistic Communism... to cooperate towards establishing a just social order" (Nos. 11-12).

The text contained a veiled criticism of fascism, noting that "all with prudent zeal [must] also refute those errors that... extol the cult of race or nation or state to such an extent that they deny or completely weaken the most fundamental rights of the human person, the family, other nations, and the very Church of Christ" (No. 13).

It also called for the creation of "centres of social action and a secretariat", as was already being done in some places. It likewise demanded that "truly suitable fathers should be chosen for this apostolate who can give themselves over to it entirely" (No. 14).

It urged provinces that had not yet incorporated this apostolate on account of being buried under their already excessive work, to carry out a discernment that would allow them to abandon ineffective apostolates for ones more directed towards the universal good (No. 15). Finally, once again the text reiterated that

Jesuits had to remain on the side-lines of administrative and political issues (No. 16).

Undoubtedly, this was the most complete text during this period on the so-called social apostolate, recognising its existence, its apostolic fruitfulness and its urgency.

In 1939, Ledóchowski himself wrote a letter to the provinces of America, in which he asked them to find a social centre “modelled on the Parisian work ‘*Action Populaire*’”. There already existed, therefore, the desire to mimic the efforts of French Jesuits—under the direction of Fr. Desbuquois—who were seen to be achieving excellent results. In response to this letter, the *Institute of Social Order* was founded in New York in 1940.

6.2 Fr. Janssens Gives Impetus to the Social Apostolate

In 1946, once the war was over, *General Congregation 29* was convoked, in which Fr. Janssens was elected. This General would play a fundamental role in giving the impetus which would drive forward the social apostolate within the Society in the following decades. He gave it his stamp of approval and promoted it directly and decisively.

GC 29 also dedicated Decree 29 to the “social apostolate”. The decree appreciated that after the onslaught of wartime violence, the foundations of social order had “collapsed”. Hence the urgency to contribute to restoring “the proper order of society according to those principles which our more recent Supreme Pontiffs have so brilliantly expounded.” The Congregation “decrees that as soon as possible some ‘centres’ for social research and action [are] to be established in each province or region, if one does not already exist” (No. 1). It requested that they be sufficiently resourced with experts and subsidies, so that they could promote the social apostolate and provide direction for Jesuit social action. It also asked the provincials to send “one or even more fathers to devote all their

energy to this social apostolate” wherever there were large numbers of workers (No. 1). It praised Jesuits who were active among the workers in situations of great personal sacrifice (No. 2). Once again there was a call to train workers and their leaders, adapting the most suitable means for each place (No. 2).

The decree added a new component, as it required all priests—“even those dedicated to spiritual ministries”—to exercise this apostolate “by explaining the social teaching of the Church, by guiding the souls of the faithful towards social justice and social charity, and, finally, by establishing social projects by means of the members of our organisations” (No. 3). The apostolate was therefore conceived as cross-disciplinary, a dimension that had to be incorporated into other ministries. This idea would be consolidated in the following decades.

It was repeated, as in the previous Congregation, that Jesuits in formation had to be introduced to the Social Doctrine of the Church early on in their studies, but it was added that “those of them who seem to be more suited to the social apostolate should be chosen early so that... they can be assigned by superiors to special studies in the theory and practice of social activities” (No. 4). Finally, the decree indicated that the effectiveness of this apostolate would depend to a great extent on the austerity with which it was lived (No. 5).

Fr. Janssens would stick to the social program put forward by this Congregation during his generalate, in a determined and systematic manner, leaving a lasting mark on the Society which would guide successive Generals in later years.

6.2.1 A Magna Carta: The Instruction on the Social Apostolate (1949)

Because of its importance and the impact it had in the years that followed, Fr. Janssens’ Instruction⁸—in the form of a letter

⁸ The Instruction translated into English can be consulted <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/other-documents/1949/>. In the

addressed to all Provincials on the social apostolate—warrants careful consideration.

The Instruction came accompanied by some guidelines included in a brief letter from Fr. Aldama—then Secretary of the Society—in which, at the General’s behest, he requested that the text be read in the dining halls of the Society’s houses. It indicated to the provincials that they should hold a specific consultation on the document, to examine before God whether the Province’s engagements were in accordance with this social direction and to study what could be done in the future. Thereafter, a report on the Province’s social works was to be sent to Rome, including a summary of the decisions that had been made at the consultation. Thus, the Instruction was a tool to monitor provincial engagements in detail.

Father Janssens warned from the beginning of the need to seek a “wider and more enduring good”, faced with the risk of pursuing other “immediate and less important” concerns, thus recalling one of Ignatius’ own criteria for the selection of ministries. It was about “procuring the salvation of souls by the most efficacious means” (No. 1).

In the document he mentioned the danger of the “materialistic atheists” who aspired to conquer the whole world using violent means. They were encountering fertile terrain due to the inequality in which humanity was living, which was forcing the majority to face hellish life conditions. In this way, “atheist communism” could only be defeated by implementing a just social order (No. 2).

Janssens also criticised the liberal materialism “of the rich and the capitalists”, who looked after their own particular interests, instead of the common good of all humanity. He said that they believed that all social ills could be solved by economic or material measures. Their abundant assets encouraged vices, selfishness

original Latin it can be found in *Acta Romana* vol. XI, (1946–1950), fascicle V, pp. 709–725.

and greed. This materialism favoured the “tyranny of plutocratic corporations”, which preferred to see hunger and misery fester than their income reduced (No. 3).

He was concerned that the Church was so unknown to the proletariat, which remained “blinded by materialism”. There were also non-believers among the wealthy, but a smaller proportion (No. 4).

Janssens lamented that Christ continued to suffer “hunger, nakedness, exile and contempt”. The poverty suffered by so many people in the world “must not be tolerated; there must be a change”. “Was this the reason that God so wondrously established the dignity of human nature... that a few rich men might heap up wealth and condemn so many of their brethren in Christ to destitution?” There was a need for all human beings to live an ordinary and bearable life (No. 6).

He said that works in favour of the poor who were unable to provide for themselves—the elderly, orphans, the sick—were praiseworthy. But the Fr. General wanted to deal with the people in the ordinary classes who, although they had the strength to earn a living, could not provide for themselves and their families because of “the imperfection of the social order”, despite their hard work and frugality. In addition, because these people lacked the bare minimum in material goods, they were deprived of spiritual ones. Most of the human race was in this position (No. 6). This paragraph in the Instruction demonstrated the degree of maturity reached by then in the conception of “the social apostolate”. It did not focus primarily on alleviating the deprivation suffered by the poor, but on transforming a social order which could not give a decent life to those who, for their labours, should have had access to one.

Janssens then ventured a definition of the social apostolate: “[to] aim at procuring for as many men as possible... an abundance of both temporal and spiritual goods... that he may not

feel depressed or looked down upon, nor be exposed to trials or temptations... so that all the children of God may duly attain that happiness for which the infinitely generous and self-diffusive goodness of God has destined them” (No.7).

The Fr. General continued to insist on the need to train Jesuits in what was termed “a social attitude” or “social-mindedness”, to better understand the Doctrine of the Church (No. 8). In reality the desire was for Jesuits to experience a change of heart, without which it would not be possible to advance in this apostolate. It was about being aware of the fate of most of the human race, of taking ownership of what it meant to be humiliated, ignored, scorned, to be an instrument by which others got rich, while watching on as others were “abounding in riches” (No. 9).

Janssens requested for this training to commence in the novitiate, fostering love for the worker and the ordinary man “as daily benefactors”. He urged that opportunities be provided to live and work alongside the labouring classes in factories. He called for the uprooting of the caste mentality, typical of those who believed themselves more worthy of esteem and respect (No. 10). This training had to carry on into the Tertianship, reflecting on the defects and requirements of the social order, adapting the studies to these situations of need (No. 11). For the Tertianship, he proposed ministries among the ordinary people and the proletariat, in factories, in manual labour, visiting workers and the poor, to get to know the “wretched state of their homes, their poor food and clothing” (No. 12).

Father General did not stop there, and demanded that “certain Fathers of suitable talents, industrious, and of reliable and strong character, should be trained in theoretical and practical studies... and those of the highest type”, combined with work experience in places where Catholic social work had advanced. He asked these Fathers to establish a “Centre of Information and Social Action” in their provinces with the purpose being “to teach the theoretical

and practical social doctrine to others”, spreading the Social Doctrine of the Church “by publishing books, by periodicals and various writings, by conferences, lectures”, according to the needs of each region (No. 13). Priests, lay people, employers and workers would need to be brought together. The centres the text referred to were modelled on the French *Action Populaire*. These Fathers had to have first-hand experience of working and living alongside the workers (No. 15). Janssens insisted that these social works had to be brought to the Missions, where it was still possible to prevent the spread of atheistic communism (No. 24).

Speaking in general about the Society’s ministries, The Fr. General affirmed it was crucial for them not to be directed only at the most well-off and educated, so as to “prevent our Society from justly being classified with the rich and the capitalists”. Many of these ministries had to be directed towards the proletariat. Janssens indicated that the Residences—communities of Jesuits not attached to educational institutes—were particularly suitable for this.

Janssens then pointed out that other ministries also had to cooperate with the social apostolate: faculties of sociology in universities and colleges, without distinction between rich and poor ones. He dedicated a long section to fostering social-mindedness among students in the colleges. This would come about through teaching and contact with the suffering reality of the poor and the workers.

Fr. Janssens drew a link between the renewal of social-mindedness and the life of austerity: “how great are the things, formerly considered almost necessary for life itself, that can be taken away without detriment to health or work”. Everyone would have to let go of what they could “for the love of Christ... the poor” (No. 25).

And all this would have a positive purpose: “to spread the Kingdom of God and Christ on earth”, a “kingdom of justice, love and peace” (No. 27).

The Instruction was a true Magna Carta for the social apostolate. Firstly, it was a milestone in the Society's reflections on social matters, which must be set within a broader framework of experiences garnered from initiatives in some provinces, the impetus of the General Congregations—especially GC 29—and the ever deeper understanding of Social Doctrine of the Church. Secondly, a large part of the work carried out in the following decades in the social field, and the extent to which the Society's mentality would change can be traced back to the guidelines laid out in this document. Thirdly, it indicated the way forward, which Fr. Janssens would promote during his generalate and which would dictate the development of many provinces in years to come. This General took measures so that the Instruction could be brought to life in the provinces, at a time when many of them were growing and looking for apostolic means to express the mission of the Society.

In addition, all this occurred in decades when the Society was experiencing significant growth. That was why Janssens' guidelines had a strong impact on new generations, who would go on to give impetus to the Society's mission in subsequent years. It could be said that the Instruction came at the perfect moment to create change. During Janssens' generalate, the number of Jesuits grew from 28,839 in 1946, of whom 14,372 were priests; to 35,968 in 1964 with 20,026 priests. This was the highest number ever reached in history, as after 1960 the number of scholastics and brothers started to decrease. Meanwhile, the number of provinces and vice-provinces grew from 51 to 84 and 5 new missions were established.⁹ At that time there were 7,125 missionary Jesuits, a number that Janssens himself considered insufficient.¹⁰

⁹ This data can be found in the entry "Janssens", in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ Cf. Urbano Valero, "Al frente de la Compañía. La Congregación 31", in *Pedro Arrupe, General de la Compañía de Jesús. Nuevas aportaciones a su biografía*, ed. Gianni La Bella, Bilbao – Santander, Mensajero y Sal Terrae, 2007, pp. 139–250, p. 144.

His influence on the generations that joined the Society during those years was very significant. Hence, the route marked out and implemented by Janssens from the beginning of his period would leave a lasting footprint on the Society into the future.

6.2.2 *Other Measures Given Impetus by Fr. Janssens*

Janssens published a new document in 1954, a *Letter on the canonisation of Joseph Pignatelli*.¹¹ In it he again drew the distinction between works of charity and social action which had already been outlined in the Instruction. He said that works of charity, the only type of work prevalent in Pignatelli's time, were good, but he stressed that social action was better, because it was more universal and more lasting. Charitable works temporarily alleviated and mitigated suffering; but social action transformed the foundations of an unjust social order. The Ignatian criterion of the more universal good surfaced again here and in its application a new-found priority was given to what could be termed social justice or social charity, something that the Fr. General was always keen to emphasise.

Under Fr. Janssens the distinction between “social service” and “social action” reached a point of maturity. The first consisted in serving the poor, providing food, clothing, education, health... In Christianity this was always taken to mean charitable service. “Social action”, on the other hand, had to do with the transformation of the unjust economic system, which was producing workers who lived in misery. It was a deeper action, “aimed at organising economic and social life anew, so that, in a more Christian structure, everyone can enjoy in an equitable way the many material goods that the Creator has made available to them.”¹²

¹¹ Cf. *Acta Romana* vol. XII (1951–1955), fascicle V, pp. 693–697.

¹² Manuel Foyaca, *Visita social de la América Latina. Instrucción. Carta memorial a las provincias de México*, Mexico City, Buena Prensa AC, 1958, p. 26.

The Society, since then, has chosen the option to favour social action over social service.

Social action could be expressed in different ways: 1) organise workers in trade unions to advocate for their rights; 2) promote the coming together of employers, so that they could facilitate worker demands; 3) promote workers cooperatives; 4) influence public sphere, either through parties, or by developing criteria for socio-economic legislation; 5) collaborate in the moral regeneration of all people by teaching the Social Doctrine of the Church.¹³

Therefore, social action preferentially targeted the transformation of structures, this being a “more universal good”: “mere social service does not solve the social problem of our time. We must go to the root, pulling up injustice from where it stems! And only through social action inspired by the Encyclicals can we achieve the peaceful reform of current structures.”¹⁴

In 1955 Fr. Janssens considered it necessary to send a *Visitor* to Latin America who would be in charge of promoting the social apostolate, with the power to act in the name of Fr. General and with his authority, with a view to giving urgency to the implementation of the Instruction on the Social Apostolate. The Jesuit Fr. Manuel Foyaca was chosen, originally from Cuba, and he held this position between 1955 and 1962.¹⁵ For many provinces the experience was a tough one, as they already had many demanding apostolic works and Fr. Foyaca’s guidelines required them to increase their efforts. He was responsible for the creation of the network of *Centros de Investigación y Acción Social* [CIAS; Centres for Research and Social Action]. He visited every country in Latin America and assessed the situation of the social apostolate in each of the nineteen provinces, vice-provinces and missions

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁵ Iraneidson Santos Costa, “Jesuítas em campo: a Companhia de Jesus e a questão agrária no tempo do CLACIAS (1966–1980)”, in *Cadernos IHU ideias* 249, 2016, p. 3.

that existed at the time. He selected young Jesuits with a vocation for social issues and sent them to Europe or the United States to specialise in social, political and economic sciences, so that upon their return to their provinces of origin they would create or strengthen the CIAS.

The Visitor sent a memorial letter to each of the provinces through which he passed. The one addressed to the province of Mexico was published.¹⁶ In it, he indicated that the Fr. General had informed him that the Instruction had been written specifically with Latin America in mind. From reading the text, which is long and contains many explanations, one gets an idea of the areas this priest paid particular attention to during his visits. First, he stressed the need for a Centre for Research and Social Action (CIAS). It had to be ideological in character and have specialists dedicated to study and outreach. It needed to be well funded and have a specialised library. He also requested for there to be a centre for leadership training. Second, he ensured that the most able Jesuits received training on social issues so that they could provide a top rate ministry. Third, he requested fair treatment of lay collaborators, especially if they were poor. Fourth, he urged the Society's colleges to provide education with a social conscience. Fifth, he asked for schooling to be provided for children and young workers and evening classes in educational institutes. Sixth, he stressed the importance of university education, to build social consciousness. Finally, he reiterated the value of the rural social apostolate, which required trained missionaries to travel the country to improve the moral and material life of the peasants.

In October 1960, the Fr. General himself sent a *Letter to the Latin American Major Superiors*,¹⁷ again urging them to implement social initiatives in the American subcontinent. In it the

¹⁶ Cf. Foyaca, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Cf. *Acta Romana* vol. XIII (1956–1960), fascicle VI, pp. 873–877.

Fr. General affirmed his support for the Visitor's decisions, even though they might have been at odds with the provincials' positions. Here he showed his determination to implement the Instruction's guidelines, which in turn were in line with GC 29, where he had been appointed Superior General.

In this document he considered it most urgent: 1) to create a centre for studies and social action, where one did not yet exist, which would be called CIAS. As a prerequisite there would need to be Jesuits assigned to social studies; 2) to provide social training to students at the Society's universities; 3) to involve employers in social matters and; 4) to cater for the establishment of workers' institutions to advocate for their rights.

What is striking in relation to the social apostolate during Fr. Janssens' generalate is the clarity of his ideas which remain relevant even today; they were truly pioneering for social matters within the Society. They would nourish the reflection that later became set in stone during GC 32 (1975). Under this General the essential features of the social apostolate as it is understood today can already be seen. He adopted the guidelines from GC 29 which elected him and tried to implement them to the word, directly overseeing the process, without allowing the provinces to be tempted to water-down the measures. He gave the social centres, and the social dimension more broadly, a strong impetus. He emphasised the training of capable Jesuits who could give depth to this apostolate and assigned them to social studies. As time went by, they began to have a great influence. All of this occurred during a period of intense growth in the number of Jesuits and provinces in the Society, which fostered commitment to social concerns for years to come.

6.3 The Social Centres

During the decades prior to GC 29 and throughout the generalate of Father Janssens, Social Centres were created in some provinces.

By the end of his generalate they numbered about twenty.¹⁸ General Congregation 31 (1965) would once again request the establishment of Social Centres in Decree 32 (No. 4), and their numbers would grow little by little. By 1966 there were 23 social centres throughout the Society, in which 165 Jesuits worked.¹⁹

To give an overview, some of the more significant centres are listed here, although this is not intended as an exhaustive list nor does it include some of the ones founded under Fr. Arrupe.

The establishment of *Action Populaire* (1894) in France has already been mentioned, which would be followed by *Institut d'Études Sociales* (1923), specialising in courses on the Social Doctrine of the Church. In Spain there were the magazines *Razón y Fe* (1901) and the aforementioned *Fomento Social* (1926), which publicised Christian social thought. The *Centro di Studi Sociali* in Milan would give birth to the magazine *Aggiornamenti Sociali* (1950), with the aim of spreading the Social Doctrine of the Church, for its practical application in Italian society. It also sought the renewal of democracy in the post-war period.

Fr. Charles Plater,²⁰ inspired by the French social works that he had experienced, founded the *Catholic Social Guild* (1909) in England, a research association on social issues. He was also a prolific writer on social issues. Although he died at the age of 45, he left a deep influence on the conscience of the province. Inspired by his thinking, Fr. Leo O'Hea created the *Catholic Workers' College* (1922) in Oxford, providing education with a strong social focus for students in need. From 1965 onwards it was renamed *Plater College*.

¹⁸ Jean-Yves Calvez, *Fe y justicia. La dimensión social de la evangelización*, Santander, Sal Terrae, 1985, p. 37.

¹⁹ Ricardo Antoncich, *Apostolado social: sector y dimensión apostólica*, Conferencia de Provinciales Jesuitas de América Latina, no year given, p. 16. The eleven Latin American centres were located in the Antilles, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

²⁰ Cf. Entry "Plater" in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*

In India, Fr. Hoffman founded the *Catholic Cooperative Society* (1908) in Chota-Nagpur for the Ranchi tribes. It ran a credit union, built wells, disseminated agricultural techniques and conducted religious services and catechesis. Later Fr. Jerome D'Souza established the *Indian Social Institute* (1951) in New Delhi, which he intended to contribute to a new social order in independent India. From there he created centres for the theoretical and practical training of workers in social and developmental matters: *Xavier Institute of Social Service* (1955) in Ranchi and the *Loyola School of Social Work* in Chennai.

In Asia Pacific, Fr. Janssens created the *Committee for the Development of Socio-Economic Life in Asia* (SELA, 1959), with the aim of promoting Jesuit social activities in that vast region. It had its first headquarters in Hong Kong and later in Bangkok and Manila. Its structure was a precursor to the Provincial Conference.²¹ It contributed to fostering a social mentality and the development of various social initiatives in the provinces. Its journey came to an end at the beginning of the 90s.

In the Philippines, the *Institute of Social Order* (1947)²² was created by Fr. Walter Hogan in response to the needs of marginalised groups (workers, peasants, the urban poor, women) and as an attempt to improve their social situation.

In Africa, in a similar vein and inspired by *Action Populaire*, the *Institut Africain pour le Développement Economique et Social* (INADES, 1962) was founded in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, along with the *Centre d'Etudes pour l'Action Sociale* (CEPAS, 1965)

²¹ Conferences are large geographic areas that include a sufficient number of provinces, to allow collaboration. They are chaired by a President who convenes and works with the provincials that belong to that Conference. There are currently six: Africa, Latin America, Asia Pacific, United States and Canada, Europe and South Asia.

²² This centre followed on from the *Institute of Social Order*, founded years before by Fr. John Delaney SJ in New York.

in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. In what is now Zimbabwe, *Silveira House* (1964) was founded.

In the United States,²³ in New York, John LaFarge founded the first *Catholic Interracial Council* (1934), which later spread throughout the country, with the aim of defending the rights of African-Americans. Years earlier, the *Cardinal Gibbons Institute* (1926), an industrial school for black students in southern Maryland, had been established. It worked tirelessly for interracial justice, including within the Church.

For his part, Fr. John Delaney created the *Institute of Social Order* (1940) in New York, although later it would move to Saint Louis, where the *Social Order* magazine began to be published. He wanted to inspire Jesuits in their commitment to the poorest in society, by offering them training, showing them how to incorporate social issues into their ministries and by helping the Society in the United States respond to the demands of the Social Doctrine of the Church.²⁴

Louis Twomey²⁵ founded the *Institute of Industrial Relations* (1947, later known as the *Institute of Human Relations* and now under the name *Twomey Center for Peace and Justice*) at Loyola University in New Orleans, focused on the pursuit of social justice in factories and the defence of workers' rights, more specifically by forming trade unions. He also worked to combat racial segregation in Catholic schools and churches, including within the Society itself.

In Latin America, on the insistence of Fr. Janssens, social centres were founded in most countries. Many of them included training on social issues, leadership and awareness, direct service

²³ Cf. Entry "LaFarge" in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*

²⁴ Cf. Gladys W Gruenberg, *Labor peacemaker. The life and works of Father Leo C. Brown, S.J.*, St. Louis, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1981, p. 51.

²⁵ Cf. Entry "Twomey" in *Diccionario Histórico*, *op. cit.*

to disadvantaged sectors, research and publication. In the Dominican Republic, the *Centro de Formación y Acción Social y Agraria* [1963, CEFASA; Centre for Social and Agrarian Training and Action] was created to advocate for disadvantaged civil society groups in Santiago de los Caballeros, through public advocacy carried out in networks. In Cuba, Foyaca himself, who was already mentioned above, founded the *Centro de Información y Acción Social* [1950, CIAS; Information and Social Action Centre] soon setting up in Vedado, Havana. A CIAS was established in Buenos Aires in 1956. Years later *IBRADES* was founded in Brazil (1968); it was to have a national focus in a country that had four provinces at the time. Also, in Brazil, the *Centro de Estudos e Ação Social* [1967; Centre for Social Studies and Action] came into being in Salvador, Bahia, with the aim of contributing to overcoming poverty and social exclusion. The *Capacitación Agroindustrial Mixto Jesús Obrero* [Jesus the Worker Mixed Agro-Industrial Training Centre] was established in 1971, in Urcos, Peru, with the objective of providing agricultural training for farmers to improve development. In Bolivia, *Acción Cultural Loyola* [1966; Loyola Cultural Action] was founded to improve the lives of farmers in the south of the country. A little later, also in Bolivia, the *Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado* [1970; Centre for Research and Promotion of Farmers] was created, working to facilitate farmers in Bolivia to find their own pathways to development and national integration. The *Centro Gumilla* was founded in Venezuela (1968), a service aimed at transforming the country's society into one more just and humane. In Paraguay, the *Centro de Estudios Paraguayos Antonio Guasch* [1967, CEPAG; Antonio Guasch Centre for Paraguayan Studies] was created to promote the study and theoretical understanding of the country's situation, promoting actions in favour of social justice. Fr. Hurtado founded the *Hogar de Cristo* (1944) in Chile, to cater for the poorest of the poor, expanding their opportunities. He

built close ties with the Chilean ecclesial community so they would take responsibility for the excluded in society. In 1951 he launched the magazine *Mensaje*, to propagate the new social outlook in the Church. In Colombia, in Valle del Cauca, the *Universidad Campesina* [1962, UNCA; Farmers University] was founded, which later became known as the *Instituto Mayor Campesino* [IMCA; Higher Institute for Farmers], with the aim of training farmers in agricultural issues and how to advocate for their rights.

The *Consejo Latinoamericano de los CIAS* [CLACIAS; Latin American Council of the CIAS] was founded in 1966 to work towards greater unity and effectiveness in social action among the CIAS in Latin America. It had two functions: on one hand, to report to the Fr. General and the Provincials on the needs, possible remedies and conflicts related to the CIAS and their mission and, on the other, to coordinate social action between the Centres, by exchanging information and sharing activities. It was located in Santiago, Chile, as its first two executive secretaries came from the *Centro Bellarmino* in Chile. From 1972 it was relocated to Santo Domingo, where it remained until its closure in 1980. Both the Executive Secretary and the regional coordinators were appointed by the General. It constituted a long-term initiative to support and coordinate existing Social Centres.

As can be seen in this brief summary of just some of the most important centres, these decades saw a proliferation of CIAS, which continued and increased under Fr. Arrupe and Fr. Kolvenbach. In 2008, the Secretariat for Social Justice in Rome, at that time led by Fr. Fernando F. Franco, prepared a catalogue of the Society's social centres and institutions²⁶ totalling 549 institutions, containing 4.71% of the total number of the Jesuits.

²⁶ *Society of Jesus. Universal Catalogue of the Social Apostolate*, Social Justice Secretariat, 2008.

6.4 Characteristics of the Social Centres

Over the years the social centres became ever more diverse, gradually evolving to adapt their responses to local and historical contexts. But what exactly are the social centres? It could be said that they are the basic institutional instrument which the Society uses to implement the social apostolate. Their diverse nature has on two occasions provoked Jesuits involved in social issues to ask themselves what exactly the characteristics of a social centres are.

The first of these moments was in June 1980, at a meeting convoked in Rome entitled “The Social Apostolate in the Society Today”²⁷ and attended by Fr. Arrupe himself. Among the many themes discussed was the exact nature and characteristics of social centres. In his final address, the Fr. General dedicated a long section to detailing the functions of the Society’s social centres,²⁸ stating the following:

- They offer Christian social formation to members of the laity, social leaders and priests.
- They awaken evangelical consciousness in people who influence social transformation.
- They contribute to deepened research, because the problems in question are not simple, their solutions are not evident and new issues are constantly arising. This research is interdisciplinary, combining theology and social analysis, with an evangelical assessment of social situations.
- They focus on the Society itself to help it expand its social mentality.
- They integrate the commitment to justice with the service of faith.

²⁷ The contents of what was shared in this meeting can be found in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 18, July 1980, pp. 83–130.

²⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 125–126.

The group discussions had focused on the same theme. They managed to develop a list of characteristics of the Centres of Research and Social Action,²⁹ which focused on the human qualities of the people involved, more so than their tasks:

- A group of Jesuits radically committed to the promotion of justice, in solidarity with the poor. They live an ordinary life and have a participatory approach to their work.
- This group seeks structural change in society, not just individual transformation.
- It aspires to contribute to the building of a new, participatory and more just society.
- It defines its priorities based on a scientific (critical) analysis of reality, its structures and context. This analysis involves reflection and discernment.
- It works with other groups and people who share the same ideal of social transformation.
- It seeks communion with the Church and with the entire Society.

Almost 25 years later, following a reflection carried out in 2004 by the Assistancy Social Coordinators and as part of a comprehensive analysis of the Social Centres, the Secretariat for Social Justice in Rome published a list of the Centres' distinguishing characteristics³⁰:

- They promote justice as one of their main goals.

²⁹ The functions from Group One were reproduced almost literally, cf. *Ibid.*, p. 99, because it was the one that brought together the greatest wealth of knowledge. It was made up of people from Latin America. In any case, in general the various groups were on the same page.

³⁰ For an English Language version see http://www.sjweb.info/sjs/documents/Studio_eng.pdf, visited March 2019. This study analysed 323 social centres, which were among the 549 social institutions that were included the Catalogue of the Social Apostolate in 2008.

- They aim at the transformation of social structures through research, formation or social action.
- They form part of the Province's social sector and they should coordinate with it.
- They are committed to an attitude of discernment that encompasses all aspects of the organisation, to adapt to the changing reality in the following areas: mission and vision; methodology and organisational structures, collaboration with other institutions, the use of tools of social analysis.

As can be seen, great efforts were made to assess the nature of the Social Centres, in order to better understand their purpose and identify some essential guidelines for each centre to follow. The reality, however, continues to be very varied.

6.5 Social Centres: Contributions and Crossovers

The foundation of the Social Centres signposted a change in the conceptualisation of charity. By the time they came into being, there was already an awareness that charitable service to the poor was palliative, necessary but insufficient. Structural action was needed which would lead to a lasting and effective social transformation. In fact, this was an internalisation of the criticism of traditional Christian charity by the workers' movements, which viewed it as an exercise in damage control for capitalism, sweetening its visage and simultaneously stifling change.

Social centres sought social and political charity; they wanted social justice. It is not that they neglected the poor, rather they strived to produce a knock-on effect. Changes to legal and economic structures exponentially increased the effects of their actions. New attitudes also favoured a more just order. With this in mind, social centres entered not only into the political arena, but

also into the cultural one, where perceptions and choices were in play. Thus, they responded to St. Ignatius' summons in the Constitutions for the quest for the most universal good.

As was explored in Chapter 2, from its inception the Society founded charitable institutions that provided lasting change. In fact, this basic intuition for structural change had been present since the Society's beginnings. Institutions provided stability to the Society's activities, made it possible for significant numbers of people to work together, and meant that the organisation's initiatives did not depend exclusively on individual members. Institutions were a way to preserve the conviction present at the founding moments and the values that energised it, captured in the institutional culture. They survived over time. Therefore, one of the fundamental tasks of these institutions was to return at each stage their initial vocation, to renew it and adapt it to ever changing circumstances. The wealth of a social institution is in its awareness. The Social Centres kept up this tradition of seeking to create institutions within the social sphere.

Every one of these Social Centres grew out of a specific cultural and historical context. They came into being at moments when clear needs were identified that required a response. These needs changed over time, while the institution remained. Hence, the importance of the Centres remaining in a constant state of discernment that allows them to continuously evaluate and adapt to new circumstances. While they have solid charismatic foundations, their initial intuition can be updated to historical circumstances. But this discernment exercise requires great flexibility on the part of the individuals involved. Therein lies a possibly crucial element of the Social Centres; their capacity to continually discern the signs of the times, adapting their response in accordance with them. This discernment is an extra task on top of the services and tasks for which they receive support. It is not readily apparent and may be considered unnecessary. For this reason, it is sometimes put off. If this happens consistently, it is a recipe for the project disappearing or fading into irrelevance.

Experience shows that financing is also fundamental to the Social Centres. Janssens asked the provinces to fund the Centres, something that has not always happened. A certain level of economic autonomy allows them some ideological independence, which is so important to them operating in the social and political sphere with their own voice, without submitting to the dictates of others. Currently, they depend on donors, cooperation agencies and provinces in the Western World, mainly in Europe. This conditions their outlook and stances. The current context, where there is increased monitoring of how funds are spent, puts pressure on the Centres' independence and on the likelihood that they can maintain their primary mission. In addition, charitable service projects find it easier to access finance than transformative initiatives, which are less likely to be understood, supported and subsidised. Research work, taking public stances and political advocacy always have more obstacles in their path to accessing finance.

Knowledge has been the keystone for the Centres' growth. Many of them have publications, dedicate themselves to formation, disseminate ways of thinking and the culture of solidarity, etc. Reflection is part of their identity and strength. If this reflection decays, the Centre itself languishes. The Fr. Generals insisted on the need to provide training in social sciences to Jesuits, who could later go on to lead these Centres. There have been times when this was done in a systematic way, which provided these institutions with quality staff. Nowadays things are done differently. As the wealth of reflection wanes, these institutions deteriorate, and questions arise about their future viability.

Many of the Social Centres grew out of the impetus of pioneering people with charismatic strength: closeness to realities of suffering and their victims, deep convictions, a vision for the future and the ability to rally a team and to attract donors. These charismatic figures are key to the development of these institutions. But sometimes, if they remain at the head of the Centre for too long and come to personalise it in excess, their presence ends up being

a hindrance. If the Social Centre is to live on, this initial impetus must be followed by an effort to professionalise the organisation and make it relevant in times to come. There is therefore a balance to be struck between charisma and institution, which is not always easy to achieve, but it is crucial for the Centre to exist in the long term, while preserving its initial prophetic nature and energy.

More and more lay people are participating in these institutions, both as hired staff and as volunteers. It is thanks to them that the Centres are still alive to this day. This is a very enriching space of collaboration. The Centres have been able to gather people with deep convictions and a firm commitment to a more just world, as well as significant professional skills. Many of them are also happy to share in our Ignatian spirituality. Today, their contributions are essential to keeping the Social Centres' going.

It must be acknowledged that Fr. Janssens played a fundamental role in laying the foundations of what would become the social apostolate. He fully committed himself to its development once elected at General Congregation 29. He did not just try to inspire Jesuits and the provinces to drive the apostolate forward. Nor did he limit himself to offering Ignatian or spiritual reasons for its development. Rather, he engaged the capacities of his government so that the provinces would support the growth of the social apostolate and would establish Social Centres. Without their contribution, the social apostolate would not be the same. Nor would the foundations have been laid, in human terms and in the provinces, which would later give rise to the approval of Decree 4 in General Congregation 32. Many of the Jesuits who attended this Congregation were in formation at a time when Fr. Janssens was purposefully promoting this sector. However, during his time it was essentially just another apostolic sector and was not yet a true dimension encompassing and enriching all of the Society's ministries. This would only happen with the arrival of Fr. Arrupe.

A Prophet of Justice at the Head of the Society: Fr. Arrupe

Fr. Pedro Arrupe was elected General of the Society of Jesus in 1965, during General Congregation 31. This was a key assembly, as it reoriented the Order to adapt to the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council. He was a charismatic man, with remarkable leadership skills, who participated in the great post-conciliar ecclesial events and brought the Society in line with the Church's conciliar reorientation. He was an ecclesial touchstone who many looked to for encouragement and direction. He was re-elected for five terms as the President of the Union of Superiors General, where he served with dedication and care. A man who with his courage, his open and enterprising spirit, his smile and personable disposition left his mark on the Society and on the Church itself, no less. He was a champion of social justice, a cause that he perceived as intrinsically linked to the Christian faith. He devoted a good part of his efforts to making the Society become a body that is at the service of faith and justice.

Before moving to Rome, he had lived in Japan for 27 years as a missionary, in a culture profoundly different from his own. He had arrived in the country as a young man, with the necessary flexibility to assimilate to a language and customs that were alien to him.¹ He served as Master of Novices in Hiroshima in 1945,

¹ For many of the references about his life, consult the detailed biographical data collection in Gianni La Bella (Ed), *Pedro Arrupe, General de la*

when the atomic bomb was dropped, razing the city. Later he was appointed provincial of Japan. He was serving in this role at the time of his election at General Congregation 31.

Arrupe was originally from Bilbao, where he was born in 1907. His father was an architect and his mother died young, while he was still a child. A brilliant student, he took up medical studies in Madrid, but would leave to join the Society of Jesus in 1927. Two episodes in his early years uncovered his vocation. Both were linked to his contact with poverty and suffering. The first was when he served disadvantaged families in poor neighbourhoods in Madrid, where he was a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The second was during a trip to Lourdes when he witnessed three healings that doctors considered miraculous and which had a profound impact on him. He felt he had encountered God: “I felt God so close in His miracles that he dragged me violently behind him. And I saw him so close to those who suffer, those who mourn, those who are shipwrecked in this life of helplessness, that it ignited in me a burning desire to imitate Him in this voluntary closeness to those cast aside by the world, those who society neglects, because it is unthinkable that there would be a soul vibrating under so much pain.”² These words, recollected long after the experience, bear witness to his subsequent religious vocation.

He spent his early years as a missionary in rural Japan, a situation in which he touched the hearts of people through the strength of his inner convictions, rather than through his mastery of the language and Eastern logic. The man had a vibrant inner world that manifested in his way of being and expressing himself. He devoted himself completely to that country, immersing himself in its mentality and culture.

Compañía de Jesús. Nuevas Aportaciones a su biografía, Bilbao – Santander, Mensajero y Sal Terrae, 2007.

² Pedro Arrupe, *Este Japón increíble. Memorias del P. Arrupe*, 4th ed., Bilbao, Mensajero, 1991, p. 19.

During the Second World War he served as Master of Novices in a suburb of Hiroshima, behind a hill near the city. When on August 6th, 1945 the United States launched the atomic bomb spreading destruction and death throughout the metropolis, the novitiate became a small field hospital, where dozens of people amassed, their skin covered with terrible burns. People fled terrified and disoriented from a city in flames and in ruin. He, along with his novices, tended to all who arrived. Arrupe declared the cloister to be broken and began to care for the sick, who numbered over a hundred. The area in which the novitiate was located was relatively unpopulated at the time. The sick were housed in the chapel, on the first floor and even in the corridors. The day after the explosion, Arrupe went to celebrate the Eucharist, stepping around the sick who were lying on the ground. On beginning the Eucharist and turning towards to the congregation at the “*Dominus vobiscum*”, he was met with the overwhelming image of men and women covered in wounds and burns. Of all those to whom he tended, only four died.

After the war he spoke on numerous occasions and in different places around the world of his experiences. He wrote the book “*Yo viví la bomba atómica*”³ [“I Lived the Atomic Bomb”] and visited many countries. During his provincialate, he spent a lot of time travelling to raise funds for the mission in Japan. Gradually, he became an insightful observer of the world. His ability to listen to reality, to look beyond what the eyes can see, developed further when he became General. His trips, his encounters with people from different parts of the world, and his dialogues with his Jesuit companions allowed him to scan the horizons of his era and to generate an ever more synthetic analysis that even today, several decades later, holds true, as if it had come to him as a vision.

Upon becoming General, Don Pedro—as they sometimes called him—gathered many experiences of closeness to the poor

³ Pedro Arrupe, *Yo viví la bomba atómica*, Bilbao, Mensajero, 2010.

which had been a determining influence in his worldview: “I remember well my expulsion from Spain, my work with the Puerto Ricans in New York, with the poor in the ‘Settlement’ in Tokyo, with the sick and dying in Hiroshima after the atomic bomb, and when they took me to Yamaguchi Jail, accused of being a spy. These experiences are still very much alive in me and influence my way of seeing and thinking.”⁴

Arrupe’s life was greatly impacted by the process of secularisation that was spreading around the world, picking up speed after the Second World War and becoming a well-established reality around the 60s. In the ecclesial sphere, the adaptations arising from the Second Vatican Council developed a mature dialogue with the hitherto reviled modernity, but they also gave rise to concerns and uneasiness in some circles which considered them a disfiguration or distortion of the faith. However, Fr. Arrupe attributed a good part of the crisis of faith in the world to the existence of poverty: “For hundreds of millions of Catholics the real crisis of faith comes not from materialism or from a poorly assimilated theological reflection, but from the brutal misery of their existence... It is extremely difficult for people in the Third World to take the Good News seriously, which up to now has not succeeded in brightening in any way the ever-painful existence of these people.” And he went on to say that he had “witnessed its consequences: the growing scepticism of this faith and this Church. Or, rather, of the men and the institutions that are so content with their comforts, while knowing the misery of others.”⁵ It was not an ideological lecture, but what he perceived and felt through contact with people.

He also said that “we cannot deny that the growing influence of atheism in the Third World is essentially linked to the social

⁴ Pedro Arrupe, “Experiencias de pobreza / inserción. Entrevista con el P. General”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 13, 1979, pp. 71–78, p. 74.

⁵ Pedro Arrupe, *La Iglesia de hoy y del futuro*, Bilbao – Santander, Mensajero y Sal Terrae, 1982, p. 38.

context in these countries. In other words, in many of these countries people are convinced that the Christian faith, as it is preached, and even more so how it is lived out, is not capable of doing away with economic, social and cultural misery.”⁶ Personally, he was ever more convinced that the spreading of atheism was linked to the inadmissible hardship experienced by many people.

7.1 Changes after World War II

Fr. Arrupe was a child of his time and the events of those decades. The post-war period heralded an unexpected time of prosperity in Europe and the United States. Rebuilding works gave way to strong economic investment with many workers becoming incorporated into the middle class. The political system was organised so as to avoid the upheaval experienced during the interwar period which had made the very viability of the capitalist system uncertain. Keynesian economic policies ensured stability in those decades and made sustained growth possible.⁷ A repeat of the mass poverty of unemployed workers that had been unleashed after the 1929 Crash could not be ruled out. So, states put in place welfare systems that would act as a bulwark against poverty. All efforts were directed at preventing the reproduction of the conditions that had plunged the world towards its second global conflict. During those years, unions increased their negotiating powers, especially in large state companies, and were victorious in guaranteeing new rights for the working class. The years from the end of the Second World War until the middle of the 70s would become known as the “The Glorious Thirty”—an expression coined by Jean Fourastié, the French economist—in

⁶ Pedro Arrupe, *Hambre de pan y de Evangelio*, Santander, Sal Terrae, 1978, p. 158.

⁷ Fernando de la Iglesia Viguiristi, “Cinquant’anni dalla “Populorum Progressio”. L’attualità della sua profezia”, in *Civiltà Cattolica*, No. 4001, 2017 (I), pp. 468–480, p. 469.

which liberal democratic capitalism stabilised with ample social safety nets and a burgeoning middle class. It was a new social reality, one that had never before been imagined.

The colonial system, which reached its pinnacle before the Great War, had practically disappeared by the end of the 1960s leading to the creation of numerous states. Most of these new countries were characterised by their volatility—because they lacked stable state institutions—and by their poverty, since the colonial system had been based on the exploitation of natural resources in the colonies, without a corresponding effort made to develop their societies. Education was scarce and patchy for a growing youth population, as countries were undergoing a dramatic population explosion. The inequality and vast distance between the First World and the Third World⁸ became evident, and since then this has been a harrowing sign of the times. Many perceived that the wealth of a few was the direct reason for the poverty of others. In view of this, “Dependency Theory” was developed in the 1960s and achieved broad recognition. It posited that the development of rich countries occurs at the expense of cheap resources extracted in poor countries. The products manufactured by the powerful nations are later sold in the Third World at a higher price, perpetuating a situation of constant dependence.

The former colonies, despite repeated attempts to remain as non-aligned countries—Bandung Conference, Belgrade Conference...—were pushed to position themselves either with the capitalist bloc or the communist bloc. Both blocs engaged in a silent cold war through armed conflicts triggered in these infant countries, without ever coming into direct confrontation. The ever-present reciprocal nuclear threat prevented the great powers from plunging into

⁸ The term “Third World” was coined in 1952 by Alfred Sauvy, a French economist, to refer to the countries that at that time did not belong to the capitalist or communist blocs, which in practice meant the former colonies. This term was used to refer to developing countries.

conflict with each other; instead they challenged each other in their geographical spheres of influence.

The economic growth experienced until 1973—when the oil crisis began and heralded the fall of an economic model that would see itself transformed at the turn of the decade—made it seem at the time that it was possible for development to reach all humankind. For many, these were years of optimism, of a firm confidence in the capacity of science, technology and the market to overcome the deep-seated misery of the human race. There was faith in progress and dreams of another possible future for humanity.

On the other hand, at the end of the 1960s, mainly in the Western nations, people were growing weary of the modern way of life that was causing discontent; criticism was levelled at the capitalist strongholds in the West and the claim for freedom as a project of individual self-realisation spread. The revolution of 1968, which had its epicentre in France and spread to other nations, marked the beginning of liberation movements aimed primarily at achieving greater freedom in private life; and creating the political conditions to realise this. In parallel, disenchantment spread towards modern development, manifesting in a distrust of its promises and taking form as postmodernity. During the generalate of Arrupe, slowly but steadily, the mood changed from one of confidence and optimism towards the modern world and its progress, to one of growing scepticism, a key attitude that would gather ever more vigour in the following decades.

The ecclesial context was marked by the Second Vatican Council, to which Arrupe, already then in his role as General of the Society, was summoned so that he could take part in the final session. The most relevant document in relation to the question of justice was the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (GS). This was a long text that covered many topics, and it would go on to have a lasting impact on the Church's discourse. The Constitution

clearly identified the reality of unbelief and atheism. It also acknowledged that many human beings were living miserable lives: “While an immense number of people still lack the absolute necessities of life, some, even in less advanced areas, live in luxury or squander wealth. Extravagance and wretchedness exist side by side. While a few enjoy very great power of choice, the majority are deprived of almost all possibility of acting on their own initiative and responsibility, and often subsist in living and working conditions unworthy of the human person” (No. 63). It indicated that it was necessary to promote development, which could not be exclusively economic, saying “the fundamental finality of this production is not the mere increase of products nor profit or control but rather the service of man, and indeed of the whole man with regard for the full range of his material needs and the demands of his intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life; this applies to every man whatsoever and to every group of men, of every race and of every part of the world” (No. 64). Development had to be holistic—benefiting and growing every aspect of the human person—and it had to reach all human beings. This idea would be dealt with in the Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (1967) shortly afterwards.

GS also denounced inequalities and acknowledged the need for social justice: “excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace” (No. 29).

The text was approved at the end of 1965 and was accompanied by other important documents that characterised ecclesial thought during those years: *Pacem in Terris* (1963), by John XXIII on peace; *Populorum Progressio* (1967), by Paul VI, on the development of peoples; *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971), by Paul VI, on the Social Doctrine of the Church, on the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. The existence

of all these texts shows the importance that the social question had already garnered in the Church's conscience.

In 1968 the Second General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate was held in Medellín, which was a beacon shedding light on the social situation on the continent within the ecclesial context and which acted as a guide for the Church's own work. The bishops acknowledged the "misery that marginalises vast swathes of humanity. That misery, as a collective act, is an injustice that cries out to the heavens" (No. 1, in the section "*Promoción humana*"). "The Christian quest for justice is a demand arising from biblical teaching. All people are merely humble stewards of material goods. In the search for salvation we must avoid the dualism which separates temporal tasks from the work of sanctification" (No. 5). This final text reinforced the option for the poor, saying that "The Lord's distinct commandment to 'evangelise the poor' ought to bring us to a distribution of resources and apostolic personnel that effectively gives preference to the poorest and most needy sectors and to those segregated for any reason whatsoever, encouraging and accelerating the initiatives and studies that are already being made with that goal in mind" (No. 9, in the "Poverty" section).

The preferential option for the poor⁹ would be definitively set in stone in 1979 in the final document of the third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Puebla.¹⁰ Well rooted in these documents and supported by liberation theology, the option would become part of the Social Doctrine of the Church, appearing in the St. John Paul II's Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* in 1987: "Here I would like to indicate... the option or love of preference for the poor. This is an option, or a special form of

⁹ For a complete study of the issue refer to Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Pobres y opción fundamental", in *Mysterium Liberationis. Conceptos fundamentales de la teología de la liberación*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino, San Salvador, UCA editores, 1991, pp. 303–321.

¹⁰ See numbers 733 to 735.

primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness” (No. 42).

Another critical moment in the understanding of the relationship between Christian faith and social justice occurred at the Synod of Bishops of 1971. Its final document, *Justice in the World*, would state: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission to redeem the human race and liberate it from every oppressive situation.”¹¹ Never before had anyone gone so far as to consider work on behalf of justice as an essential part of preaching the Gospel.

As can be seen, Arrupe’s time as General was replete with events that were catalysts for change in the world. That generation lived in the awareness that they were standing at the gates of a great transformation. There was intense optimism, alongside a rising postmodern scepticism. They were aware of the misery suffered by many human beings and were horrified and wished to fight it. Aside from this, the period was also one of discernment for the Church in terms of understanding itself and its role in the world. The Second Vatican Council laid the foundations for future developments. Ecclesial documents proliferated and the Church felt responsible for spreading the faith and communicating life to the people of the era. The option for the poor emerged, as did the conviction that the quest for justice was an essential part of the Christian message. So, the years of Arrupe’s first phase as General, after his election on May 22nd, 1965, combined with his own personal experience, prepared the ground for the formulations on justice authored by subsequent General Congregations.

¹¹ It can be found in http://www.confer.es/508/activos/texto/wcnfr_pdf_2566-U1bgv1kNzDhk7cr2.pdf, visited in March 2017, pp. 1–2.

7.2 The “Faith and Justice” Decree, General Congregation 32

The fourth decree of the General Congregation 32 (1975)—also known as the “Faith and Justice Decree”—marked a turning point in the comprehension of the Society’s mission. Entitled “Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice”, it constituted a historic milestone in the Society’s way of understanding its apostolic service. The drafting of the decree did not follow a predetermined plan, but actually involved some creative inspiration, and as such, it was unexpected and novel, although there were earlier precedents that may be viewed as catalysts which made its creation possible. These precedents, as well as some of the events during GC 32, will be outlined in the following, finishing with a commentary on some aspects of the decree.

7.2.1 *General Congregation 31 and Later Years*

General Congregation 31 (GC 31) was convoked suddenly, on account of the death of Fr. Janssens on October 5th, 1964. It took place over two sessions of about two and a half months during 1965. This Congregation was in charge of electing a new Superior General, Fr. Arrupe, and also adapted the Society’s laws in view of the new requirements established by the Second Vatican Council. It was a huge task that the Congregation performed with generosity and which would go on to have a significant impact. So began the updating process that the Council itself had requested of religious congregations.¹²

GC 31 approved fifty-six decrees, including a special decree (D. 3) which responded to the explicit demand of Pope Paul VI for the Society to be employed in the fight against atheism.

¹² The decree *Perfectae Caritatis* from the Council called for the “adaptation and renewal of the religious life [that] includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time” (No. 2)

Seventeen decrees were produced concerning the apostolates, one of which dealt with the social apostolate. This text spoke of the importance of social structures, which “exert an influence on the life of man, even on his moral and religious life” (No. 1) and signalled that the social apostolate’s objective was “to build a fuller expression of justice and charity into the structures of human life in common. Its goal in this is that every man may be able to exercise a personal sense of participation, skill, and responsibility in all areas of community life” (No. 1).

The text also requested, among other recommendations (No. 4), that the social apostolate be prioritised in the planning of apostolic activities; that the Jesuits would be duly assigned to this type of apostolate and that social centres would be promoted in provinces and regions according to the needs of each region. The document was excellent, but it continued to identify the social apostolate as a stand-alone sector, something that would be modified at Congregation 32. Situated in its historical context, it was a work of consolidation without stepping beyond the framework already articulated by Fr. Janssens, who, as has been seen, was particularly engaged in advancing this form of apostolate.

Fr. Arrupe, in his initial interventions, signalled his personal interest in the social apostolate, but he went beyond the horizons of Congregation 31 and promptly expressed the need for a social commitment that encompassed all the forms of mission in the Society. In a long letter dated December 12th, 1966, to the Provincials of Latin America about the social apostolate in that region, he told them: “The socio-economic structures, given their mutual interdependence, constitute an absolute social block or system; the intrinsic inadequacy of some of the fundamental structures in force in establishing a just social order, results in the current inadequate system globally, which is in discord with the Gospel. From this arises the Society’s moral obligation *to rethink all its ministries and apostolates* and to analyse if they really respond to the urgent

and prevalent requirements of justice and even of social equity.”¹³ He spoke in similar terms to the Jesuits of the United States on November 1st, 1967¹⁴ in a long letter on the fight against racial discrimination. In the section addressing policies, he urged *all the Society’s works* in that country to respond to this challenge, courageously stating that their efforts had hitherto been insufficient.

In May 1968 he met with the provincials of Latin America in Rio de Janeiro, who at the end of that meeting sent a letter to all the Jesuits of the continent—a text known as the “Rio Letter”—in which, among other things, they said: “Most of the inhabitants of the continent are in a situation of misery, whose injustice, in the words of Paul VI, is tantamount to the emphatic punishment of God.” Moreover, they went further by saying that “the social problem in Latin America is a problem of man. The era in Latin America in which we are living is a historical moment of salvation. That is why we propose to absolutely prioritise this problem in our apostolic strategy.”¹⁵ Social consciousness was extended across the whole of the Society, given impetus by the weight of history and Pedro Arrupe’s enthusiasm.

Arrupe took an active role in the Synod of Bishops of 1971 which has already been mentioned. Later, he was entrusted with the preparation of a text that would outline ways to express this option for justice. He quickly prepared a booklet entitled “Witnessing to Justice” that gained wide recognition.¹⁶ In it he affirmed that “The

¹³ Cf. “De apostolatu sociale in America Latina”, in *Acta Romana* vol. XIV (1961–1966), fascicle VI, pp. 784–793, p. 791.

¹⁴ Cf. “De apostolatu inter varias populorum stirpes”, in *Acta Romana* vol. XV (1967–1972), fascicle I, pp. 166–177.

¹⁵ The last two quotes are taken from “Carta de los provinciales de América Latina a los jesuitas del continente”, in *Jesuitas. Anuario de la Compañía de Jesús, 1968–1969*, p. 74.

¹⁶ The text is in Arrupe, *Iglesia de hoy...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 311–346. TN: For an English Language version see “Witnessing to Justice in the World”, *Justice with Faith Today: Selected Letters and Addresses—II*, ed. Jerome Aixala, St. Louis, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1980, p. 79–120.

Gospel is a Gospel of love. But love demands justice. The Gospel is therefore a Gospel of justice also; it is the Good News preached to the poor.”¹⁷ The document detailed the relevance of political involvement: “to regard action for justice as principally liberation... from the unjust economic, social, and political structures in this sense obviously calls for some kind of political involvement.”¹⁸ But it also alluded to the need to influence public opinion, hence the value of drawing on education and pastoral care: “[we must] consider ways and means of moving public opinion in support of justice programs.”¹⁹ “Here is a vast field for the educational and pastoral action of the Church, and for the involvement of the laity in the promotion of justice.”²⁰ He would even venture to propose a list of possible forms of action in the public domain: “public demonstrations and protest marches, the calling of strikes to ensure just working and living conditions, the boycotting of goods and services which are provided through unjust means or practices...”²¹

In 1973 he met the Alumni of the Society of Jesus gathered in Valencia. At the meeting he said: “Have we Jesuits educated you for justice? You and I know what many of your Jesuit teachers will answer to that question. They will answer, in all sincerity and humility: ... we have not educated you for justice... which the Church now demands of us... We must help each other to repair this lack in us, and above all make sure that in future the education imparted in Jesuit schools will be equal to the demands of justice in the world.”²² His direct message shocked the audience, and the president of the Confederation of Alumni submitted his resignation.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

²² Pedro Arrupe, “La promoción de la justicia y la formación de las Asociaciones de AA. AA. de los jesuitas”, in *Hombres para los demás*, Barcelona, As. A. A. Caspe y Sarriá, 1983, pp. 157–204, p. 161.

Arrupe went much further than many of his Jesuit companions in different parts of the world. Certainly, there were Jesuits working with the poor, in prisons or hospitals, and others defending the rights of workers or immigrants, but this was not always considered a typical element of the Jesuit mission.

In addition, although the Society ran many charitable works, in many circles it was understood that being involved in the promotion for justice meant being associated with left-wing or subversive movements. So many people ignored these issues, as they were viewed as being against their interests as religious people.²³ This fact explains why the emergence of Decree 4 was met with such incomprehension and resistance among some delegates in GC 32, and again at later congregations as the line of thinking developed.

7.2.2 *Preparation and Evolution of General Congregation 32*

On September 8th, 1973, Fr. Arrupe convoked the General Congregation 32 (GC 32), motivated by the “need to seek out, specify and concretise even more effectively the service that the Society must render to the Church in a world that is changing so rapidly, and the need to respond to the challenges that this world presents us.” He recognised that the previous Congregation had taken on the same task, but he considered that the rapid transformation during those years required a “deep, objective and open examination of the current situation.”²⁴

However, preparations had begun before,²⁵ with a document sent in 1971 to the provinces which detailed the topics to be dealt

²³ See Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, “The Service Of Faith And The Promotion Of Justice In American Jesuit Higher Education. University of Santa Clara”, 2000 in <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Kolvenbach/Kolvenbach-SantaClara.pdf>, visited in June 2019.

²⁴ The last two quotes are taken from P. Arrupe, “Carta convocando la Congregación General 32”, in *Acta Romana* vol. XVI (1973–1976), fascicle I, pp. 126–131.

²⁵ Here we are following Calvez, *Fe y justicia...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40ff.

with at the next General Congregation. In this document there was just one mention of the “social apostolate”. In 1972 six working groups representing geographical regions—North America, East Asia, Brazil, India, Western Europe and Southern Europe—met to prepare proposals concerning the mission. Other groups such as Africa and Eastern Europe were not able to meet. In three of the documents from these six groups, injustice appeared as one of the “points that requires more attention at the hour of apostolic discernment.” These came from India, East Asia and Brazil. These documents also included the problem of “unbelief and the spiritual needs of large sectors of humanity.”²⁶

In June 1973, a *Summary of the Reports* was prepared based on the reports received from the provinces in response to the regional working groups’ documents. This Summary showed, on one hand, a welcoming of the struggle against injustice, but on the other, strong reservations towards an apostolate that risked degenerating into social humanism and activism. Some quarters sensed Marxist influences. The request was also made that the Congregation refrain from identifying the work for the Kingdom with the fight against poverty and injustice. So, there was already plenty of fuel for a fiery discussion.

During the celebration of the Provincial Congregations, a postulate from Mexico was submitted which catalysed the desire of many Jesuits and provinces for the Society to take a firm option in favour of justice. The postulate was over fifty pages long, including statistical annexes, and it was adopted by many provinces.

In the Anglo-Saxon world²⁷ the postulate from Mexico soon became known to the *Center of Concern* in Washington, which

²⁶ The last two quotes are from *ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁷ Here we are following William Ryan, *Jesuits and Justice at GC32*, in an unpublished text used at a meeting on “Jesuits and Justice” at Loretto College, Toronto University, on February 16th, 2012. William Ryan participated in GC 32 and his story is an exciting narrative of how the wording for the fourth decree was reached.

had recently published a book, *Soundings*, which underscored the intimate relationship between social consciousness and Ignatian spirituality. At the *Center of Concern* they felt that the postulate from Mexico and their recent publication had much in common, so they translated the Mexican text into English, thus making it known among the Jesuits.

Therefore, after this discreet groundwork, it is no surprise that many of the postulates submitted to the Congregation requested a “social commitment from the entire Society”, and that they spoke of concern for the poor and of an “option of the Society in favour of the promotion of justice”. In this way, some petitions came to be summarised as such: “that the General Congregation... express an option of the Society for the promotion of social and international justice, so that all its deliberations in relation to our life or to our apostolic mission, are inspired by this option” and that “the Congregation approves—and commissions Father General to execute—a program of reflection for all the members of the Society around the problems of international justice.”²⁸ This was the environment in which the Congregation began.

The postulates were suggesting that there was an underlying position which would act as a lens to focus on all other problems. The Congregation went much further. After having agreed on six points to be considered as priorities, it was suggested that a “priority of priorities” be voted on to determine the order in which to deal with them. The Congregation agreed to adopt as a first priority the “criteria of apostolic service today” and “the promotion of justice”, considering both at the same time. Finally, both topics, tackled in separate committees, were compiled into one text that would deal with the mission.

The discernment on this decree went on for thirteen weeks. No other decree was met with such involved discussion from

²⁸ Calvez, *Fe y justicia.*, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

the assembly. There were many interventions; Arrupe himself supported the promotion of justice as a priority at the December 20th session, saying that “the option concerning justice... is first in the sense that... it should influence our whole life. The 1971 Synod of Bishops expressed... [it] as the essential reason for preaching the Gospel... This indeed was St. Ignatius’ idea of the priesthood... that sacerdotal character... leads us to... be truly conscious that the justice of the Gospel should be preached through the cross and from the cross... Our General Congregation [must be] ready to take up this responsibility and... to enter upon the more severe way of the cross, which surely will mean for us a lack of understanding on the part of civil and ecclesiastical authority and of our best friends.”²⁹ The tone and insightfulness of this intervention would leave its mark on the approved text.

The greatest points of disagreement were around to the weight given to the promotion of justice within the Society’s entire apostolate and in the tasks of each individual Jesuit. There were varied conceptions and situations.

The final text was shaped by a number of rousing contributions, namely the Latin American sensibility towards injustice and the Central European and North American theological reflection. Asian regions were more concerned with the evangelisation of non-Christians. The delegates from Eastern Europe were aware of the possible abuse of the idea of justice; in fact, the “promotion of justice” sounded to them like a Marxist slogan. In any case, the decree was almost unanimously approved

²⁹ Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, “La Congregación General 32”, in *Pedro Arrupe, General de la Compañía de Jesús. Nuevas aportaciones a su biografía*, Bilbao – Santander, Mensajero y Sal Terrae, 2007, pp. 251–355, p. 275. TN: For an English Language version see “When Decree 4—Justice with Faith—Was on the Anvil, Rome, December 20, 1974”, *Justice with Faith Today: Selected Letters and Addresses—II*, ed. Jerome Aixala, St. Louis, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1980, p. 317–320.

after the final discussion involving more than 150 amendments, as there were only a dozen opposing votes.³⁰

7.2.3 *Essential Contents of Decree 4*

The text updated the Society's mission to "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement."³¹ This expression acted as a kind of slogan that was unifying and inspired a dynamic vision, facilitating creativity. The decree knitted together historical reality with the transcendental dimension. It put faith and the struggle for justice into a fruitful dialogue, underlining the prophetism of faith and portraying a merciful justice imbued with Christian charity. It linked atheism to a disordered world that was generating marginalisation and impoverishment. It thus offered a synthesis of the mission that painted the concerns for faith and history into one picture; two aspects that had traditionally been viewed as opposing. This change would lead to many misunderstandings in later years.

The service of faith consisted in bringing the countercultural gift of Christ to the world.³² This was a task linked to history, because it consisted in following in the footsteps of Christ who is present in cultures and events and who initiates the announcement. Jesuits were called to join with Christ's work and manner and not to impose a preconceived and supposedly monolithic faith, as His presence in the real world is constantly dynamic.

In the expression "promotion of justice", the word promotion entailed a planned strategy. It was about giving a total, corporate and multi-faceted response, rooted in faith and experience, to a reality torn by injustice (GC 32, D. 4, No. 7). The term justice was left undefined, which has since led to a certain ambiguity. On

³⁰ The Congregation had begun with 236 congregants, a few had already left when the final vote took place.

³¹ CG 32, D. 4, No. 2.

³² Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, *El servicio de la fe...*, op. cit., p. 175.

the one hand it included social justice, which we can also refer to as socioeconomic or distributive justice;³³ on the other, it was an expression of the justice of the Gospel, “that justice of the Gospel which embodies God’s love and saving mercy”.³⁴ This justice requires a commitment in favour of the poor, supported by a courageous personal option.

The cause of justice committed everyone, since it should be “the concern of our whole life and a dimension of all our apostolic endeavours.”³⁵ The union between faith and justice was to be the integrating factor of all the Society’s ministries, and all its apostolates, including educational institutions, should be evaluated in light of this.³⁶ The faith-justice dyad became the criterion of discernment when evaluating current ministries and planning future ones.

The Congregation identified three new challenges: having to preach Jesus Christ to people who had never heard of him or did not know him sufficiently (No. 24); having to face a situation in which cultural and socio-structural changes were impacting on traditional values and giving way to new individualist plans (No. 25); and the fact that although creating a more just world was possible, the necessary will power to achieve this was lacking (No. 27).³⁷

The Decree also signalled some of the necessary conditions to drive this commitment forward: a real involvement in the world that puts the Jesuits in “real contact with unbelief and with the hard, everyday consequences of injustice and oppression” (No. 35). This would be a test of faith and required a study

³³ It had been included in the Social Doctrine of the Church by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno*, No. 88, putting it in relation to social charity.

³⁴ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, *The Service of Faith...*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

³⁵ CG 32, D. 4, No. 47.

³⁶ CG 32, D. 4, No. 76.

³⁷ “it is now within human power to make the world more just but we do not really want to.”, D. 4, No. 27.

of reality and deeper real-world involvement. The Decree would also involve extensive collaboration with other social and religious groups, since the challenges faced were common to all. It paved the way for a stage of ecumenism that took into account “the cultural differences and the traditional spiritual values and hopes of all groups and peoples” (No. 37). It also specified that an apostolic revival would be required by returning to the spiritual sources of the Exercises (No. 38).

The text emphasised the need for structural transformation, as part of evangelisation itself: “to transform these structures in the interest of the spiritual and material liberation of fellow human beings is intimately connected to the work of evangelisation” (No. 40). This, however, did not take away from the accompaniment of the victims themselves (No. 40). All Jesuits were invited to be in solidarity with the poor (No. 48) and to participate in “the lot of families who are of modest means, who make up the majority of every country, and who are often poor and oppressed” (No. 49). It also included a mystical vision of the poor: “If we have the patience and the humility and the courage to walk with the poor, we will learn from what they have to teach us what we can do to help them... Through such humble service, we will have the opportunity to help them find, at the heart of their problems and their struggles, Jesus Christ living and acting through the power of the Spirit” (No. 50).

Through Decree 4, GC 32 the apostolate of the Society made a comprehensive and corporate commitment to social justice. The work for justice ceased to be a stand-alone ministry and gave way to an understanding that, in order to better serve the faith in a context of atheism and injustice, the promotion of justice should be a constituent and guiding dimension of the life and work of all Jesuits and the Society’s institutions. Social justice acquired religious status. The separation between the secular and the religious, traditionally on either side of an almost uncrossable divide, became a bridge of fruitful dialogue: the service of faith and the

promotion of justice, as two essential dimensions of the Society's apostolate.³⁸

7.2.4 *The Reception of Decree 4*

Many provinces held sessions on Decree 4 when it was finally promulgated in May 1975, after Pope Paul VI returned the decrees to the Society.³⁹ Cardinal Villot—then Secretary of State—wrote a letter on behalf of the Pope in which he said that some statements were “somewhat confusing and could... give grounds for misinterpretation... The promotion of justice is unquestionably connected with evangelisation, but... human development and social progress in the temporal order should not be extolled in such exaggerated terms as to obscure the essential significance... [attributed to] evangelisation and the proclamation of the full Gospel.”⁴⁰ He would later add: “the Society of Jesus... [was founded] for a particularly spiritual and supernatural end. Every other undertaking should be subordinated to this end and carried out in a way appropriate for an Institute which is religious, not secular, and priestly.” Paul VI feared that this issue along with the relaxation of the vows would compromise the priestly identity of the Society, causing serious damage. Later, both John Paul I and John Paul II would voice the same concern.⁴¹ Thus the seed of mutual misunderstanding was sown.

³⁸ The paragraph is a summary collected from William Ryan, *Jesuits and Justice ...*, *op. cit.*, who reproduces words spoken by Peter Bisson SJ.

³⁹ The decrees had been approved by the Congregation, but the Pope had requested that they be submitted to him. His awaited answer came May 2nd, along with some observations, before being definitively promulgated

⁴⁰ Jean-Yves Calvez, *Fe y justicia...*, *op. cit.*, p. 60. TN: For an English Language version see “Letter of the Cardinal of State to Father General”, *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, Saint Louis, Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009, pp. 396–399.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 76–79.

For their part, most of the Jesuits welcomed the text, some with enthusiasm, feeling that it offered an adequate response to the context in which they found themselves. Some provinces completely revised their apostolic plans in line with the text's demands. New projects and programs came into being, accompanied by a rigorous effort to analyse reality.⁴²

As was seen in Chapter 6, social centres and works continued to be established within the sphere of the social apostolate. This ministry experienced a revival and diversification. Some research and social action centres began to more systematically organise rural populations to defend their rights. Works targeting public opinion and denouncing situations of injustice were also founded. Likewise, small insertion communities in slum neighbourhoods proliferated, especially in the large cities of the Third World.

Three years later, during the Congregation of Procurators in 1978, Fr. Arrupe would carry out an evaluation of the impacts of GC 32. In his Report on the State of the Society,⁴³ he affirmed that efforts were being made everywhere to make the demands of the Congregation a reality, as well as “the initial fear disappearing, which arose in quite a few groups scattered practically throughout the Society, that this was a deviation from the spirit of the Institute.” He believed that the unilateralism of those “who interpreted this mission in an excessively horizontal and politicised way” was giving way to “a more balanced interpretation”. “The struggle for faith and justice... is undoubtedly one of the greatest changes that are taking place in the Society. Everywhere, sincere efforts are being made to bring about this reality... The struggle for justice goes in hand with ‘solidarity with the poor’. Despite the

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 64–65.

⁴³ Pedro Arrupe, “Informe del Padre General sobre el estado de la Compañía”, in *Acta Romana* vol. XVII (1977–79), fascicle II, pp. 422–450. The quotations in this paragraph are taken between pages 425 and 428 in which the commitment to the struggle for faith and justice is examined.

difficulties arising from this solidarity, it is apparent that the Society is increasingly taking a stand in favour of the poor and oppressed, and there are many who wish to participate in the life of the poor, seeing for themselves a glimpse of the injustice and oppression.” He also alluded to the incompatibility of the Jesuit vocation and partisan political action or “taking on roles or responsibilities in ideological movements”, something that had occurred in certain circumstances and areas. He also recognised “in many quarters a certain sympathy for Marxism in general or parties with clear Marxist inspirations” saying that “some Jesuits’ involvement and their public statements of support for these ideologies is unacceptable and causes scandal and bewilderment not only for those who suffer oppression and persecution under Marxist regimes, but for many others besides.”⁴⁴

It also bears mentioning the large number of Jesuits who were murdered for making this commitment in favour of justice in the following decades. Already by 1978 when the Congregation of Procurators was celebrated, Arrupe remembered the names of eleven Jesuits whose blood had been shed since GC32 due to their loyalty to the mission. The struggle against oppression and standing alongside the poor in the defence of their rights meant that they shared the same fate of oppression and death.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ These statements did not prevent Arrupe from acknowledging the presence of positive elements in Marxism in the same text and indicating the possibility of “a dialogue and even a certain critical collaboration with groups and movements of Marxist inspiration”. To better understand his position, see Pedro Arrupe, “La atracción por el marxismo hoy”, in *La identidad del jesuita en nuestros tiempos*, Santander, Sal Terrae, 1981, pp. 678–680 and Pedro Arrupe, “El análisis marxista”, in *La Iglesia de hoy y del futuro*, Bilbao, Mensajero, 1982, pp. 151–158.

⁴⁵ In 2015 the magazine *Promotio Iustitiae* published an edition titled “Martyrs for Justice”, whose final pages gave the names of all the Jesuits assassinated since the promulgation of the fourth decree, reaching a total number of 55 (Promotio Iustitiae No. 117, 2015, pp. 30–34, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>).

As well as making positive remarks in his assessment on the gradual uptake of the Decree, Arrupe noted that the integration of the promotion of justice in sectors other than the social apostolate had advanced at a much slower pace. Granted, there had been an effort by some groups to re-interpret and adapt the Exercises to this new perspective, but other apostolic sectors had been more reluctant. In the same address to the Procurators in 1978, Fr. Arrupe commented on this: “when ascertaining the pace, precautions and fears that prevail in some places in the face of the required renewal, as well as the lack of readiness, above all among institutions, one has the impression that we have not progressed beyond a simple attempt to adapt what we have or what we do to the needs of our times. Often, we do not dare to ask ourselves whether there are certain things we are not doing that are more important than things we are doing which we should abandon, since we cannot do everything at once.”⁴⁶

One of the complications that arose from this text was in the temptation to separate the two elements of the dyad, faith on the one hand and justice on the other, eventually positioning them at times as rivals or opposites. Some turned to promoting justice with hardly any analysis or reference to faith; others clung to a rigid faith and a monolithic style of Church, ignoring the historical reality. A tension emerged in some provinces between the educational and social sectors, because the former felt criticised by the latter, which accused it of exclusively engaging with the most affluent social sectors, thereby reproducing unjust structures.

Pedro Arrupe’s efforts after GC32 would focus on encouraging the Society to assimilate and comply with its decrees and to prevent and redirect potential deviations.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Jean-Yves Calvez, *Fe y justicia...*, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁴⁷ Matías García, “Arrupe y la justicia”, in *Pedro Arrupe, General de la Compañía de Jesús. Nuevas aportaciones a su biografía*, Bilbao – Santander, Mensajero y Sal Terrae, 2007, pp. 753–791, p. 786.

7.3 Some Characteristic Contributions

Over his many years as a general, Fr. Arrupe addressed many issues related to justice. His guidance began forming the outlines of a teaching which saw the mission adopt socially oriented characteristics.

Some wondered whether, after Decree 4, the intellectual apostolate would continue to enjoy the importance that the Society's traditions had allowed it.⁴⁸ Pedro Arrupe felt it would, because both the service of faith and the promotion of justice had strong intellectual components. The renewal of theological reflection, the Liturgy and the language of pastoral action required exploration of and dialogue with culture, by way of a rigorous intellectual exercise. For its part, the promotion of justice, as GC 32 already stated, required the Jesuits to give themselves to “demanding and serious study... to understand and try to resolve the problems of the world.” It also considered that dedicated and constant analysis was required for structural transformation, without which it would be impossible to envision reform.⁴⁹ According to the document, in order to promote justice it would be necessary to build relationships with those who have responsibility for the structures, many of them being intellectuals with social influence. Hence, the intellectual apostolate—which was left undefined in that document—would have to be strengthened.

Arrupe held the poor in high esteem for their concrete human reality, but also in their importance to the mission. For him, the poorest were “a guiding principle” and he said: “The Church of Christ must give proof of her identity in this world, as the Church of those who, according to the word of God, represent the most assured criterion of love: the poor, the tyrannised, the persecuted,

⁴⁸ Cf. Pedro Arrupe, “El apostolado intelectual en la misión de la Compañía hoy”, in *La identidad del jesuita en nuestros tiempos*, Santander, Sal Terrae, 1981, pp. 211–223.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

the exiled, the desperate. If we twist or subvert the word of God, we commit a crime of high treason to His message.”⁵⁰ He believed that the Church roots itself in the Lord by serving the least in society. It is not a matter of choice or desire; it is essential.

Speaking to the Latin American Jesuits on the preferential option for the poor, he told them that “this option... must be a strong bond of union between us. It must turn all our effort towards the same goal... multiplying our energies, giving us joy and peace. It must be the source of our spiritual and apostolic renewal.”⁵¹ He conceived of the option for the poor as a place of encounter between different sensibilities and apostolates, due to its centrality in the Gospel, and proposed it as an environment of spiritual consolation, a place where grace is given to us.

Therefore, he insisted on insertion into poor communities and adopting their living conditions, an experience aimed at fostering an understanding with which to critique one’s cultural baggage thereby opening a pathway to conversion. He believed that “the necessary change can only be conceived alongside the poorest of people.”⁵² True insertion involved participating “in some way in the economic insecurity experienced by the human group who are your neighbours.” If not, “how could one “continue speaking, in truth, of poverty, that is, of hope in God, having all the securities of the privileged?” Arrupe had uncovered the mystical motive for insertion among the poor, as a true source of unique grace.

Another issue he often spoke about was the relationship between justice and charity. He insisted on going “beyond justice, to crown it with charity. Justice is necessary but it is not enough. Charity gives justice a transcendent inner dimension and, when it

⁵⁰ Pedro Arrupe, *La Iglesia de hoy y del futuro*, op. cit., p. 47.

⁵¹ Pedro Arrupe, “A los provinciales de América Latina”, in *La identidad del jesuita en nuestros tiempos*, Santander, Sal Terrae, 1981, pp. 358–368, p. 363.

⁵² Pedro Arrupe, “Vida religiosa e inserción en el mundo”, in *La Iglesia de hoy y del futuro*, Bilbao, Mensajero, 1982, pp. 689–708, p. 701.

has reached the limit of the realm of justice, it can keep going even further. Because justice has limits, and stops where rights terminate; but love has no boundaries because it reproduces, on our human scale, the infiniteness of the divine essence and gives to each of our human brothers and sisters a claim to our unlimited service.”⁵³ For him justice only found meaning against the backdrop of Christian charity, rooted in the paternal mercy of the Father and therefore was without limits. “Love for one’s neighbour not only involves giving each person what they are due, like justice, but giving one’s whole person and it is expressed through specific acts of other virtues: beneficence (giving someone what is yours), justice (giving someone what is theirs), charity (giving yourself to someone).”⁵⁴

7.4 The Birth of the Social Justice Secretariat⁵⁵

In September 1968 at the General Curia in Rome, Fr. Arrupe appointed Fr. Francisco Ivern as Counsellor to Father General⁵⁶ for the social apostolate, tasked with supporting and developing social issues in the Society.⁵⁷ This only came into effect in 1969, when Fr. Francisco Ivern, then director of the Indian Social Institute in Delhi, was able to go to the Curia. That same year he set up in the Penitenzieri offices,⁵⁸ under the name “Jesuit Secretariat for

⁵³ Jean-Yves Calvez, *El Padre Arrupe. Profeta en la Iglesia del Concilio*, Bilbao, Mensajero, 1998, p. 148.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 148–149.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 100, 2008, edition published for the commemoration of the first 100 issues of the magazine.

⁵⁶ Cf. “Nominatur Consiliarius de apostolatu sociali”, in *Acta Romana* vol. XV (1966–1968), fascicle II, pp. 330–331.

⁵⁷ For a few months until the arrival of Fr. Ivern, this new Secretariat was temporarily left in the hands of José Maria Abad Buil, a Jesuit from Alicante.

⁵⁸ Buildings located in the General Curia of the Society of Jesus in Rome, facing “Penitenzieri” street. There is an account of how it was founded in Francisco Ivern, “The birth of the social secretariat”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 100, 2008, pp. 10–14.

Socio-Economic Development” (JESEDES). The name was of its time, as the 1960s were the decade of “development” and shortly before, in 1967, Pope Paul VI had published his Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* affirming that development was “the new name of peace” (No. 76). Father Ivern lent his talents to Pedro Arrupe so that he could promote the social commitment within the Society.

After General Congregation 32, which supported the cause of social justice, Fr. Ivern became one Arrupe’s General Counsellors, meaning that another person had to be found to lead the development of the Secretariat. During a visit to Guyana, Ivern met Fr. Michael Campbell-Johnston and asked him to become the replacement Secretary of JESEDES in the Curia. A short time later he would move to the Curia, entering in 1975. The Secretariat was then renamed “Social Secretariat SJ”. This was reported in the first issue of the journal *Promotio Justitiae*.⁵⁹ The new name of the Secretariat was more in line with the call to promote justice coming from General Congregation 32. The journal’s name perfectly captured this thrust, and by using Latin, the title’s meaning remained identical in each of the three initial publishing languages: French, English and Spanish.⁶⁰

Since then, the Secretariat has been responsible for promoting the social apostolate in the Society, providing relevant information on this apostolate to the Fr. General and his government, and fostering collaboration between social works. In 2010, Fr. Adolfo Nicolás changed the name to “Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat”, incorporating the ecological concern alongside the justice dimension, because the recent General Congregation 35 had given particular relevance to it in the mission. It was understood that the ecological aspect to the mission was inseparable from the care of the poorest, as they are the ones most affected by environmental

⁵⁹ As of the 66th edition, the magazine was renamed *Promotio Iustitiae*—spelled with *I* and not with *J*—, which is the name it carries today.

⁶⁰ An Italian version was published from 70th edition, in 1999.

degradation. Father Nicolás requested that the Secretariat deal not only with the social sector, that is, just with the Society's social works, but with the social dimension, which all Jesuit works must incorporate, even if they belong to other sectors. Thus, the Secretariat's perspective and scope was broadened.

7.5 His Final Efforts to Promote Justice

During GC 31, the lifelong nature of the role of General Superior was discussed. This was because the two previous Generals, Fr. Ledóchowski and Fr. Janssens, had appointed vicars to fulfil their roles towards the end of their days. In reality, they were no longer the ones who governed. The longer span and increasing complexity of government compelled a revision of the lifelong nature of the role of General. GC 31 had no desire to make alterations, but it did allow the General to present his resignation if, based on his conscience and the advice of his general assistants, he had come to the conclusion that there were serious reasons that would seriously and permanently prevent him from fulfilling his obligations.

At various stages during his generalate, Arrupe considered this question. He consulted his colleagues a number of times about his possible resignation,⁶¹ without obtaining the required support. However, in Rome in September 1979, at a meeting of the presidents of Jesuit conferences, Pope John Paul II gave a challenging speech identifying various aspects in the Society that needed rectification: austerity of life, secularist tendencies, religious discipline, doctrinal fidelity, the formation of young people.⁶² It is

⁶¹ The information in this section is based on Manuel Alcalá, "La dimisión de Arrupe", in *Pedro Arrupe, General de la Compañía de Jesús. Nuevas aportaciones a su biografía*, Bilbao – Santander, Mensajero y Sal Terrae, 2007, pp. 913–955.

⁶² This can be found in the letter that Arrupe wrote to the Society communicating the content of said speech. It is in *Acta Romana* vol. XVII (1972–74), fascicle III, pp. 641–643.

possible that his stern message about the Society and the way it was being directed, which had been reiterated in different ways in the communications of the last three pontiffs, came as a blow to Pedro Arrupe's morale and confirmed his desire to end his generalate. At that stage he was in his fifteenth year as General.

In February 1980, he again made the case for his resignation to his general assistants. He felt he did not have the required vitality to govern and considered it time to incorporate a younger General with more energy. The general assistants were convinced that Arrupe's request was reasonable. In mid-March the provincials were also consulted, another required step. Almost all the provincials approved his resignation. This encouraged Arrupe to begin preparing a new General Congregation, the sole body that could accept his request. Before sending the letter of convocation to the Society, he requested an audience with the Pope, to communicate his intentions. He did so on April 18th, 1980, in a meeting that lasted 10 minutes, where he explained to John Paul II the steps taken and his intention to convoke a General Congregation. The Pope's response came in May: he ordered Arrupe to suspend the preparation of the GC, because "he did not consider it opportune for the good of the Church, nor for the Society."⁶³ This came as a severe setback and confirmed the Pope's distrust of the Society and its General.

The situation became even more complicated when it became clear that the Society's own legislation required the Provincial Congregations to be convened that following year, as a preliminary step to an upcoming Congregation of Procurators. In it, it would be necessary to debate whether or not to convoke a General Congregation.⁶⁴ After consulting the Secretary of State of the Vatican, the Pope issued an emphatic response: he requested

⁶³ Manuel Alcalá, *La dimisión de Arrupe*, *op. cit.*, p. 921.

⁶⁴ This is one of the specific tasks of the Congregations of Procurators, which, according to the Society's law, must be convened every four years.

the General not to commence the procedures in Society to convoke a General Congregation. This order was an intervention in the Society's own law.

The rejection must have hurt Pedro Arrupe deeply, but he continued to govern and give impetus to the Society. In the following year—until August 7, 1981, when he suffered a cerebral thrombosis—he was prolific in his support of initiatives in the field of the promotion of justice. In May 1980 he visited the Jesuits in Cuba, in a difficult moment for the Church. In June of that same year, he attended a meeting convoked in Rome entitled “The Social Apostolate in the Society Today”,⁶⁵ in which directors of social centres from different parts of the world came together to reflect on their characteristics and functions. Soon after, Fr. Arrupe summoned Jean Lacan and fifteen other Jesuit workers to Rome to listen to them and to dialogue with them about the Workers' Mission, and later he would write a letter on the subject.

In August, in Cologne, he participated in a conference series in celebration of the centenary of the completion of their cathedral. He gave a speech, “The Church, Service and Power.”⁶⁶ In October, he participated in the Synod of Bishops, which was themed: “The Role of the Christian Family in Today's World”. In November he wrote to the Society about the problems concerning the family. In December he wrote a letter to the provincials about the Marxist analysis, after much consultation with Jesuit experts in the field. It helped to counter unfair accusations levelled against some Jesuit colleagues. That same November he wrote a letter to the Society to announce the founding of the Jesuit Refugee Service, after a consultation on refugees that had taken place in Rome.

⁶⁵ The contents this meeting can be found in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 18, July 1980, pp. 83–130.

⁶⁶ Pedro Arrupe, “La Iglesia, servicio y poder”, in *La Iglesia de hoy y del futuro*, Mensajero, Bilbao, 1982, pp. 99–121.

One would be hard pressed to find another year where the Society's central government was as prolific in holding meetings on social issues as this year when Arrupe was approaching the end of his generalate. It would have been hard for anyone to imagine that he lacked energy, as he had indicated. In this fashion, he left an invaluable legacy for the future and demonstrated what had been one of his deepest ambitions in life and in his role as General. This man had given all his strength to commit the Society to the promotion for justice.

In May 1981, John Paul II was shot by Ali Agca in St. Peter's Square, which postponed the Society's dialogue with the Vatican for months. In August Pedro Arrupe became permanently incapacitated after suffering a cerebral thrombosis. This effectively ended his generalate. John Paul II appointed a Delegate for the Society, Fr. Paolo Dezza SJ, in a papal intervention that suspended the Society's own procedures. Dezza would prepare the subsequent General Congregation, the 33rd, where a new General Superior, Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach, was elected.

7.6 A Persevering, Creative and Daring Man

The widespread progress in relation to the promotion of justice during the generalate of Fr. Arrupe must be examined within the context of its long incubation period, as summarised in previous chapters, and the ecclesial transformation brought about by the Second Vatican Council. Had the prior preparation not happened, it would be difficult to imagine how the later developments could have been realised. The soil was turned by individual efforts, a desire to adapt to new times, the social optimism of the era and a new ecclesial atmosphere.

Arrupe's period at the helm can be viewed as the product of a long previous journey, to which he brought new energy and charted new courses. The response to the Labour Question, the creation

of many social centres and the firm stances of Fr. Janssens were all consolidated during Fr. Arrupe's time. Various forces converged on him, and in him they reached maturation. Arrupe spent fifteen active years as General—there were two more, after he had fallen ill—at a time when religious orders and congregations were incorporating the rich teachings of the Council. They underwent a profound process of change and updating—*aggiornamento*, as it was referred to in the ecclesial sphere, adopting the Italian term—where they integrated the reflection on the world and the role the Church must play in it. This affected the mission of religious orders. The redefinition of the Society's mission as “the service of faith and promotion of justice” was the fruit of this process of updating the apostolic *raison d'être*.

In this redefinition of the mission, new possibilities came into play. The Society was able to explore new apostolic avenues that were previously beyond the confines of the traditional ministries of education and spiritual care. In a creative process, initiatives were developed which aimed at being present among the poor, social reflection, the creation of new social centres, political advocacy and participating in popular movements. Although it is true that many Jesuits abandoned religious life, there was also an abundance of young Jesuits who were formed in this atmosphere of renewal and who, over the years, brought new ideas, hope and excitement, and the desire to live alongside and serve the poorest people. This was a time of great apostolic innovation.

Fr. Arrupe's role was fundamental. While he was aided by earlier transformations and the historical context, his leadership paved the way for developments that otherwise would not have been possible. His personal charism contained two elements that proved to be essential: his constant desire for the Society's activities to benefit the poor, something that he carried with him throughout his life; and a profound mysticism that he generously shared, which struck an intimate chord with Jesuits and impacted

on the many people he met. He was a man of God and many Jesuits felt in the hands of God when Arrupe led them.

However, his leadership was not exclusively spiritual; on the contrary, he was directly involved in the Society's day-to-day activities and launched initiatives and projects. He convened groups, encouraged meetings, wrote numerous letters and made key decisions. He was always open and courageous. He understood that he was part of a decisive time and committed himself fully to it. His pursuit of justice was determined and constant. He never abandoned it. It is true that he tempered the excessive or misplaced dispositions of some Jesuits, nevertheless he did his utmost to drive the Society forward under the guidelines approved by Congregations 31 and 32, which embodied the major historical adjustment in the renewed Society. The endeavour did not leave him unscathed.

With Arrupe, the promotion of justice ceased to be a task for a few Jesuits or an aspect of the mission that could be entrusted to one apostolic sector. It became everyone's responsibility: Jesuits, communities and institutions. All of them had to develop a response. This determined impetus slowly went on to transform attitudes, cultures and practices. Since then, the promotion of justice has become a cross-disciplinary dimension of the Society's mission, which, like faith, must be present in all Jesuit initiatives. Little by little this has changed the face of the Society.

All of these transformations—the adaptations to the Council, and the specific one related to the promotion of the justice—brought with them numerous conflicts, both within the Church and the Society. Arrupe dealt with them. He did not back down in order to pacify conflicts and limit the resulting damages. He preferred to heed the call of the Spirit, although it brought hardship. Arrupe was deeply faithful to the Spirit that had taken root in the Congregations and this caused him great troubles. The Society also had to withstand these tensions; time will tell the extent to which they were creative or destructive.

Arrupe's commitment was a spiritual one, rooted in listening to the Spirit and being constantly attentive to reality. He had deep confidence in his fellow Jesuits and in the Society. He trusted himself. This gave him the strength and motivation to drive the Society along a path that he saw from the beginning was fraught with contradictions and obstacles. He faced them with the spirit of one who felt accompanied by God. One of his legacies in the Society is the reassurance that the promotion of justice and the option for the poor are not ideological—Marxist, as the critics have labelled them—but a challenging summons from God to the Church and the Society. Justice is God's business.

Arrupe encouraged many Jesuits to bring themselves closer to the poorest people, to learn from them, even to live like them, if possible. He permitted activities that broke with traditional religious life, like opening communities in urban neighbourhoods, or allowing Jesuits to live in areas marked by conflict. This gave renewed life to many, introduced new styles and ways to respond to reality, and gave a perspective of the world from “below”, as the poor see it. He transformed faith in the Society, making it more tender, closer to the Crucified Christ, more hopeful. Just like Arrupe's.

With Pedro Arrupe's illness, so concluded a stage full of novelty and transformation. The subsequent era would be very different and would be marked by suspicions concerning the Society, ones that were already in existence during his generalate. The option for justice acquired new nuances during Fr. Kolvenbach's years at the head of the Order. The next chapter is dedicated to these.

Deepening the Promotion of Justice: New Perspectives

Following Arrupe's illness in 1981, John Paul II intervened in the running of the Society. He appointed a Delegate, Fr. Dezza SJ, to carry out the preparations needed to celebrate a new General Congregation (GC), the 33rd, in 1983. There, Fr. Kolvenbach was elected General. The gathering was a brief one. Shortly after the election, delegates returned to their provinces, having written a few decrees. The Society knew the Vatican was watching its every move, under the suspicion of being a risk to religious life and to the Church.

Along with this complicated ecclesial context, the world was going through a severe economic crisis which began in the 1970s, but which was to continue throughout the 1980s. Neoliberalism emerged in those years and took hold in some parts of the world, such as Latin America, where it came as a blow to the aspirations of the poor and working classes. Inequality between countries increased. It also became more difficult to transform economic and political structures, not least mentalities. The optimism that had encouraged Jesuits working in the social sector in the immediate aftermath of GC 32 gave way to greater scepticism. Some provinces did not even manage to integrate the option for justice and there were serious institutional and personal reservations in some parts.

GC 32 was not accepted or assimilated with ease. It came as a shock, a wake-up call that triggered many reactions. Some came

out in support, others in opposition. Thus, the context outside the Society and developments within it led to an evolution in the way of understanding the mission, enriching it with new nuances. This chapter is dedicated to these. Following a summary of the features of that era, an analysis will be given of how the question of justice was dealt with during GC 34, because this was the Congregation which dedicated itself the most to considering the mission. Thereafter, two texts that were very relevant in later years will be reviewed. These are the *Characteristics of the Social Apostolate* document and Fr. Kolvenbach's Letter on the Social Apostolate. The mission decrees from GC 35 and 36 will also be analysed, which added further nuances. These documents paint a full picture of the evolution of the understanding of justice in the Society. They offer a fuller account of the concept of justice which informs the Society today, although it must be kept in mind that the concept never sought to be defined. The chapter ends with some conclusions.

8.1 The Option for Justice in the Spotlight

Many changes took place during Fr. Kolvenbach's generalate. The new General favoured a different governing style, with which he was more comfortable and which he felt would benefit the Society. He reorganised his team by lessening the collective workload, while increasing the level of direct reporting to him from each of his co-workers. He established a policy of providing extensive and accurate information to the Vatican about all the goings-on in the Society, so that they could receive first-hand information about specific Jesuits that was not coming through biased third-party channels, which at times were giving distorted accounts. In turn, he stepped back from the public profile that Arrupe had maintained, always keeping discreetly to the background. He gave few interviews, and when he did it was always in writing, in order to give accurate and measured answers. He

did not want to be misinterpreted, as had sometimes happened to his predecessor. This period was a difficult one, which lasted for the duration of his generalate, both with John Paul II, and later with Benedict XVI. However, Kolvenbach's name was gaining in stature and recognition throughout the Church, for his discretion, his knowledge and prudence, and for his wisdom.¹

With respect to the mission, Kolvenbach's style again differed from Arrupe. Pedro Arrupe had been a man with a great vision for the future, with charisma and leadership, who gave the Society impetus in the service of faith and the promotion of justice by launching initiatives for the Jesuits as a whole. Kolvenbach's leadership consisted of a spiritual and scholarly teaching that sought to animate the Jesuit body from within, so that it would respond generously to the challenges of the mission for faith and justice. His vast knowledge and ever-nuanced and calm writing style helped the Society to achieve a newfound balance. His personal conviction in favour of justice was clear and unwavering, despite the fact that he only adopted this mission after GC 32.² He returned time and again to this mission in his speeches, thereby encouraging an entire generation of Jesuits. However, he did not launch social initiatives from the central government, as Generals before him had. He felt this task was the direct responsibility of Jesuits, communities, local apostolic works and provinces. The central government should animate, not lead, or replace.

¹ When he presented his resignation at the beginning of General Congregation 35 (2008), possibly the most used adjective to refer to him in different speeches was "wise"—Cardinal Rodé's homily at the opening Eucharist, words of gratitude to Fr. Kolvenbach by GC 35 and Pope Benedict XVI's letter on January 10th, 2008.

² He speaks about the process he experienced during GC 32 and of his initial bewilderment at the new commitment to justice, in Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education", Santa Clara University, 6th October 2000, in <https://bit.ly/2lBeGu8>, visited in June 2019.

The confrontational context was not limited to relations with the Vatican. It was also reproduced within the Society. A stand-off between the Jesuits of the social apostolate and those in other classical apostolates, especially the educational one, had been fermenting in previous years. Schools and universities, often private and fee-paying, were oriented towards the more affluent classes, and many of them had no capacity—or even the aspiration—to integrate students from more humble backgrounds. Jesuits in the social sector felt legitimated by General Congregation 32 to criticise this position, which did not sit well with the option for the poor and the promotion of justice. In many cases, there were clashes in personalities and life-styles, in political convictions and in ways of thinking, in friendships and engagements. There was criticism and misunderstanding; wounds which only healed through the passage of time, processes of reconciliation and mutual recognition.

The toughest years, which had seen many secularisations, were now in the past after the turbulent decade that followed the end of the Second Vatican Council, but wounds remained open. This period coincided with a massive cultural transformation that took place around the May 1968 revolution. In those years, Europe's religious landscape changed definitively, paving the way for a progressive shift towards a post-Christian society. Something similar occurred in North America, albeit to a lesser extent.³ There was a collapse in the number of vocations Europe and North America contributed to mission countries. This source of abundant missionaries in times gone-by dried up, while the current population was aging. Fortunately, many of them had established home-grown vocations that over the years transformed

³ With the exception of Quebec, a society deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition, which experienced what was called the “Quiet Revolution”—“*révolution tranquille*” in French—which transformed society profoundly, relegating the Christian faith to the private sphere and plunging society as a whole into a deep state of secularisation in which it remains today.

the face of the Society, making it more diverse and multicultural, as it is today.

Quite a few of the Jesuits most involved in the social apostolate were missionaries from Western countries. They were not always able to communicate their interests and enthusiasm to the next generation. There were many reasons for this. Sometimes it was because they led their social works with great charisma, but in a very individualistic way that stifled other younger Jesuits. Other times, the young Jesuits simply sought to redefine themselves culturally and generationally, distancing themselves from their companions from other countries, charting their own course. The social impetus lost momentum. That being said, some of these missionaries had left their countries of origin with the specific desire to serve the poorest people. Among the local Jesuits there was greater interest for contributing to the overall progress of their societies, with which they felt a strong connection and deeply identified.

Over the course of the 1980s up to the 1990s another transformation, in this case a political one, took place. The triumphant expectations of Marxist liberation movements waned, reaching its zenith with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Alternative systems fell by the wayside and neoliberalism emerged as the only pathway to progress. Collective struggle for rights ceased to be the vehicle to achieve social advancement, which became a competition for individual advantages and merits. Popular collective movements appeared to be obsolete. The long battles for the transformation of political and economic structures seemed reminiscent of a bygone era, impossible to achieve. In many parts of the world, hope was lost. This end of an era also affected the social sector's initiatives which went hand in hand with liberation programmes and the advancement of marginalised minorities, in some cases demotivating them. There was strong sense of disorientation.

8.2 The Contributions of General Congregation 34

In 1995, Fr. Kolvenbach convoked a new General Congregation, the 34th, with the sole intention of discussing matters that affected the Society, as on that occasion it was not necessary to elect a new General. The Congregation lasted about three months. It dedicated four documents to the mission, Decrees 2 to 5. The first of them—Decree 2, “Servants of Christ’s Mission”—was conceived as a lens⁴ with which to read the following three: “Our Mission and Justice” (Decree 3), “Our Mission and Culture” (Decree 4), “Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue” (Decree 5). These four decrees maintained a oneness, as was described in the first one.

The lens decree, Decree 2, adopted a sapiential tone, based on the experience gained since GC 31 (1965) and steered clear from any kind of triumphalism: “the Society has felt both the strength of the Crucified and Risen Christ and its own weakness: this has been a time of testing for us, but also a time of great grace. Our many faults we know and confess; our graces are more important because they come from Christ. Some have left us to serve the Lord in other ways of life; others, shaken by the events of this period, have a weakened confidence in the quality of our vocation.”⁵

Decree 2 brimmed with the experience of lived grace, especially coming from being close to the poorest in Society: “In these years, throughout the Society, we have been purified in the faith by which we live, and have grown in our understanding of our central mission. Our service, especially among the poor, has deepened our life of faith, both individually and as a body: our faith has become more paschal, more compassionate, more tender, more evangelical in its simplicity.”⁶ It thus gave renewed value to

⁴ This decree was referred to precisely by this term, “lens decree” [original text: *decreto lente*].

⁵ GC 34, D. 2, No. 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*

the mystical dimension of the faith and justice mission, endowing it a sapiential strand derived from lived experience itself.

The same decree felt the need to reconfirm the mission formulated in GC 32: “the contemporary Jesuit mission is the service of faith and the promotion in society of ‘that justice of the Gospel which is the embodiment of God’s love and saving mercy.’”⁷ This confirmation had already been included in GC 33 and would be repeated in GC 35, implying that the faith-justice mission had not yet been fully adopted by all Jesuits, the world over.

Possibly the greatest contribution made by the second decree was to gather four aspects into the same mission: faith, justice, dialogue with culture, and interreligious dialogue. It dedicated a long section to this: numbers 14-20. As it indicated in number 15, “Thus the *aim of our mission* (the service of faith) and its *integrating principle* (faith directed towards the justice of the Kingdom) are dynamically related to the inculturated proclamation of the Gospel and dialogue with other religious traditions as *integral dimensions of evangelization*.”⁸ It made an effort to integrate these four dimensions. As the number 14 also pointed out, “We have found that whenever our ministries are conducted most fruitfully, these elements are present.”

The Congregation therefore issued a summons to work for faith and justice, in dialogue with culture and with other religious traditions. It would go so far as to say that each of these four dimensions required the other ones in order to be fully realised. In this vein, the most poetic text of the Congregation went on to say:

“No service of faith without
 promotion of justice
 entry into cultures
 openness to other religious experiences.

⁷ GC 34, D. 2, No. 3.

⁸ The italics are in the original text.

No promotion of justice without
 communicating faith
 transforming cultures
 collaboration with other traditions.
 No inculturation without
 communicating faith with others
 dialogue with other traditions
 commitment to justice.
 No dialogue without
 sharing faith with others
 evaluating cultures
 concern for justice.”⁹

In this way Decree 2 offered a synthesis of the maturing of thought in the years prior to GC 34. Its tone was sapiential, because it drew on past efforts and the lived experience of suffering. At the same time, it integrated into one mission diverse elements which were interdependent and which needed to be articulated.

Dialogue was conducive to collaboration with others. Dialogue was equivalent to bringing together the willing, working together with others, each with their own convictions and faith, in favour of a more just and more humane world. The underlying conviction was that everyone’s efforts and, in particular, everyone’s traditions were required to make this a world of dignity. This certainty did not come from a theoretical concept, but from experience: “(the option for faith and justice) put us into such good company—the Lord’s surely, but also that of so many friends of his among the poor *and those committed to justice*. As fellow pilgrims with them towards the Kingdom, we have often been touched by their faith, renewed by their hope, transformed by their love.”¹⁰ In the eyes of the Congregation, those who fight

⁹ GC 34, D. 2, No. 19.

¹⁰ GC 34, D. 3, No. 1. The italics are the author’s.

for justice, whoever they may be, were a source of motivation and comfort.

Moreover, GC 34 used the term “solidarity” profusely. In this way it aimed to emphasise the importance of closeness to the poorest in society and the deepening of the spiritual experience that arises from this encounter. As Darío Mollá SJ affirmed, “the accent placed on solidarity with the poor is the expression of the Congregation’s will, in response to many demands from within the Society, to insist on the basic spiritual experience that gives rise to concrete action for Justice.”¹¹

The importance that GC 34 attributed to culture deserves special consideration. The concept of culture was defined in the first footnote of Decree 4: “‘Culture’ means the way in which a group of people live, think, feel, organize themselves, celebrate and share life. In every culture, there are underlying systems of values, meanings and views of the world, which are expressed, visibly, in language, gestures, symbols, rituals and styles.” The Congregation distanced itself from an elitist concept of culture and gave renewed value to the ordinary way of life of human communities. Cultures—it frequently refers to the cultures of the poor—carry with them values and attitudes from which to learn: “The mission of the Society, as a service to Christ Crucified and Risen, investigates how the Lord is present in the diversity of human cultural experiences, in order to present the Gospel as the explicitly liberating presence of Christ. Ours must be a dialogue, born of respect for people, especially the poor, in which we share their cultural and spiritual values and offer our own cultural and spiritual treasures, in order to build up a communion of peoples instructed by God’s Word and enlivened by the Spirit as at Pentecost. Our service of the Christian faith must never disrupt the best impulses of the culture in which we work, nor can it be an alien

¹¹ Darío Mollá, “Solidaridad y misericordia”, in *Boletín Misión Obrera* No. 48, 1997, pp. 1–6, p. 3.

imposition from outside. It is directed towards working in such a way that the line of development springing from the heart of a culture leads it to the Kingdom.”¹²

On the other hand, after years of hard and silent struggle for structural transformation, the Congregation realised that it was not enough to modify the political and economic framework; rather, it was necessary to challenge cultural preconceptions—basic presumptions on which discriminatory rationale and common justifications are based—which normalise marginalisation and excuse the existence of poverty. The challenge was therefore greater; it was not enough to skim the surface, but we had to go deeper, to the culture which shapes stereotypes and prejudices, which normalises injustice and which deems the structures of oppression unavoidable. Decree 3 read: “Our experience in recent decades has demonstrated that social change does not consist only in the transformation of economic and political structures, for these structures are themselves rooted in socio-cultural values and attitudes.”¹³

How is a culture transformed? Fundamentally by human communities that live by other values, visions and aspirations. People who share alternative visions of a good life inspired by the Gospel: “faith that looks to the Kingdom generates communities which counter social conflict and disintegration... If wrongs are to be acknowledged and resolved, then possessiveness, chauvinism and the manipulation of power have to be challenged by communities grounded in religious charity, the charity of the Suffering Servant, the self-sacrificing love shown by the Saviour. The community which Christ creates by his death challenges the world to believe, to act justly, to speak respectfully to one another of serious things, to transform its systems of relations, to take Christ’s commandments as the basis of its life.”¹⁴

¹² GC 34, D. 4, No. 8.

¹³ GC 34, D. 3, No. 10.

¹⁴ GC 34, D. 2, No. 11.

Therefore, new communities are what helps to transform culture, opening the way to the inculturation of the Gospel. GC 34 called these “communities of solidarity”: “Full human liberation, for the poor and for us all, lies in the *development of communities of solidarity* at the grass roots and nongovernmental as well as the political level, where we can all work together towards total human development. And all of this must be done in the context of a sustainable, respectful interrelation between diverse peoples, cultures, the environment, and the living God in our midst.”¹⁵

Communities of solidarity aspire to transform people: both the poor—in order to achieve liberation—and the community members in order to give them a more human complexion. They seek change in socio-cultural values and attitudes and the reversal of unjust political and economic structures.¹⁶

GC 34 attributed great importance to the promotion of these communities, so much so that it referenced them when updating the criteria for the selection of ministries which appears in the Constitutions of the Society: “Each Province should evaluate its apostolic planning using the Ignatian criteria found in the Constitutions, read in the light of our mission today. When understood in the light of the faith which seeks justice, the criterion of “greater need” points towards places or situations of serious injustice; the criterion of “more fruitful”, towards ministry which can be *more effective in creating communities of solidarity*; the criterion of “more universal”, towards action which contributes to structural change to create a society more based on shared responsibility...”¹⁷

Therefore GC 34 had much to contribute to the mission of faith and justice, which had been formulated 20 years before.

¹⁵ GC 34, D. 3, No. 10. The italics are the author’s.

¹⁶ Cf. Patxi Álvarez, *Comunidades de Solidaridad*, Bilbao, Mensajero, 2002, p. 174.

¹⁷ GC 34, D. 3, No. 22. The italics are the author’s.

It confirmed the mission, incorporated a spiritual and sapiential dimension drawn from lived experience, identified the value of culture—taken to be human wealth shared and infused with the grace of God, and at the same time, in need of the inculturation of the faith—and signalled the need to create transformative communities of solidarity.

8.3 The *Characteristics of the Social Apostolate Document*

Shortly after the end of GC 34, a general meeting of the social apostolate was held in Naples in June 1997, with a delegate from each province in attendance, as well as the Council of the General, the delegate for formation, and the secretaries for education, spirituality, social communication and interreligious dialogue. The Fr. General Peter Hans Kolvenbach himself attended the plenary sessions over the six days of the meeting's duration.¹⁸

The Naples Congress was a key moment in establishing the sector, gaining it recognition inside and outside the Society, because it displayed its constituent parts and the variety of its manifestations. The fact that it was held in Naples allowed the delegates from each province to get to know the rich and prophetic social work of the Jesuits in the city which inspired the assembly. During the event they led a dialogue about the economic, cultural and religious context; explored the spiritual origins of their role; and finally, addressed the ways and means of the social apostolate. The Naples Congress was a memorable milestone for a very diverse and inhomogeneous sector which needed a gathering to bring cohesion. The strong participation of the General Curia helped to give gravity to the event and the social apostolate.

In terms of issues and main themes, in the wake of this meeting a special issue of *Promotio Iustitiae* was published in 1998,

¹⁸ The Naples meeting was recorded in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 68, 1997, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

No. 69, which outlined the *Characteristics of the Social Apostolate*.¹⁹ The work was carried out by the Secretariat for Social Justice in Rome, directed in those years by Fr. Michael Czerny SJ.

One of the difficulties in achieving greater cohesion and integration in the social apostolate was the great diversity that it contained. This variety was consistent with the range of social situations in different countries to which it was responding, and with the creativity of the Jesuits and lay people who collaborated in it. The Characteristics document sought to generate a common identity, to strengthen the social apostolate's brand and ultimately to give it impetus. It wanted to mimic the role that *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education*²⁰ had played in strengthening collaboration within schools. These Characteristics had been very well received and had boosted the education sector; something similar was envisaged with this new text.

The Characteristics of the Social Apostolate drew on Ignatian spirituality as a unifying element of the social sector. Hence, it detailed the apostolate's sources of motivation (chapter 1), as well as the vision that calls and inspires it (chapter 5). It also included a reflection on the Jesuits' way of life in the sector (chapter 2), which conveyed the importance that it attached to coherence between mission and community life-style. Chapter 4 dealt with the way of proceeding, while chapter 3 was the only one dedicated to considering the diversity of apostolates of a social nature.

This document was conceived as tool to gather together Jesuits and lay collaborators to reflect and deepen their understanding of essential elements of this apostolate. Its insistence on the spiritual dimension was in tune with the concern at the time to express the underlying mysticism in the sector which, although it

¹⁹ Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology, "*Characteristics of the Social Apostolate of the Society of Jesus*, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 69, 1998, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

²⁰ It can be found in http://sjweb.info/documents/education/characteristics_en.pdf, visited in June 2019.

had always been the driving force, had not been made adequately explicit.

This document was an important reference point for the social sector, inspiring a good number of training sessions for works and provinces. The Social Justice Secretariat contributed to this, by including summary tables and questions for reflection in the text to facilitate its study. Both individuals and collectives were invited to carry this out. It was translated into more languages than was usual, going beyond the core languages of Spanish, English and French to provide versions in German, Italian,²¹ Indonesian, Japanese and Portuguese, at least, as an effort to facilitate greater access the text for a diversity of cultures.

8.4 Fr. Kolvenbach's Letter on the Social Apostolate

In 2000, Fr. Kolvenbach wrote a letter to the entire Society in which he reflected on the social apostolate, drawing on his long seventeen-year experience as Superior General of the Order.²² This same year, the Great Jubilee in 2000 was celebrated, which for the Fr. General was “an appeal by our Creator and Saviour to restore lost harmony and promote social justice.” The Jubilee Year was an opportunity to question injustices of all kinds and to give hope to the poor. It came as reminder of how, when Jesus began to preach the Good News, He felt summoned “to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour” (Luke 4:18-19).

Right from the beginning of his letter, Fr. Kolvenbach stressed the need to root justice in evangelical love, since justice is an

²¹ Italian became the fourth publishing language of *Promotio Iustitiae* one year later, in 1999, and it continues to this day.

²² The Letter was published in Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, “Letter on the Social Apostolate”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 73, 2000, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

“embodiment of God’s love and saving mercy.”²³ Although he acknowledged that charity can sometimes be a subterfuge to evade justice, he emphasised that justice, left in isolation, becomes distorted. It gains meaning within the great commandment of love, which is where its true sense is uncovered.

The General pointed to an important reality: “the vast majority of Jesuits have integrated the social dimension into our Jesuit identity and into the awareness of our mission in education, formation and social communications, in pastoral and retreat work. In many places the concern for justice is an essential part of our public image in both Church and society.” This was one of the big changes that took place in those decades. While at first, Decree 4 of GC 32 created tension within the Society, from that moment forth there was an acknowledgement that the summons to promote justice had become part of the Jesuit identity.

Fr. Kolvenbach also acknowledged that the social apostolate was the direct product of the mission for faith and justice, embodying the social dimension of the mission, making it visible and concrete in a variety of ways: “social research and publications, advocacy and human development, and direct social action with and for the poor.” Outlining its positive aspects, he indicated the dedication, energy and creativity exhibited wherever the social apostolate was in existence. He also referred to its ability to attract lay collaborators and candidates to the Society.

However, he acknowledged that the rude health of the social dimension was not matched in the social apostolate which was showing signs of weakness: “There seem to be ever fewer Jesuits available and less prepared for the social apostolate, while those already in the field are sometimes discouraged and scattered, somehow lacking in collaboration and organisation. Factors external to the Society are also weakening the social apostolate: The times are marked by unforeseeable and very rapid socio-cultural changes.”

²³ GC 34, D. 2, No. 3, citing GC 33, D. 1, No. 32.

In perhaps the most repeated paragraph of the Letter, he said: “Thus the social apostolate risks losing its vigour and momentum, its orientation and impact. Were this to happen in a given Province or Assistancy, then for lack of a vital and well-organised social apostolate, the essential social dimension would also probably fade away bit by bit. Such a process of erosion would inevitably reduce *Our Mission Today* (GC 32) and *Our Mission and Justice* (GC 34) to a few obligatory but rhetorical phrases in the discourse of the Society, leaving our option for the poor and our promotion of justice hollowed out.” Since then, Jesuits in the social apostolate accepted that the circumstances, as described by Fr. Kolvenbach, were steadily weakening the social apostolate, which would eventually lead to the fading away of the social dimension.

Hence, it was deemed necessary “to keep striving to translate our social awareness, identity and image into effective, evangelically meaningful service to the poorest and most suffering of God’s people.”

Finally, Fr. Kolvenbach made some recommendations to improve the situation: adapting the characteristics of the social apostolate to the local sphere, carrying out a multidisciplinary reading of reality to be aware of historical socio-cultural injustices and structures in their complexity, and cementing the social apostolate in Ignatian spirituality and in the Jesuit tradition. He also requested that there be a coordinator of the social apostolate in each Province, Region and Conference, alongside a “commission, and with sufficient capacity, resources and time to play their role.”

The Letter on the Social Apostolate continues to be valid and it is still a reference point for Jesuits in the social sector, who can see that the situation described by the Fr. General is little different today. His statements on the sector’s weakened state and the risk of the social dimension becoming little more than a rhetorical footnote as the social sector loses importance among the provincial options, continue to be prophetically valid.

8.5 General Congregations 35 and 36: The Perspective of Reconciliation

General Congregation 35 was convened in 2008, with the dual objective of electing a new Superior General—following Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach’s presentation of his resignation to the aula which was accepted by the Congregation—and to deal with different matters relating to the Society. In that Congregation, Fr. Adolfo Nicolás was elected General and he remained in office until the next General Congregation, the 36th, held in 2016. There, Fr. Arturo Sosa emerged as the new Fr. General.

Both Congregations developed a mission decree, containing some common characteristics that represented the new threads of the option for faith and justice in recent years. First, both Congregations reflected on how life and mission are interwoven. These are not two separate realities, rather they are interdependent. Being and doing are intertwined; life is part of the mission and reflects the values that sustain service in the Society. Community is mission, not an instrument of the mission, but an essential part of the mission. As GC 35 said, “Our mission is not limited to our works. Our personal and community relationship with the Lord, our relationship to one another as friends in the Lord, our solidarity with the poor and marginalised, and a life-style responsible to creation are all important aspects of our lives as Jesuits. They authenticate what we proclaim and what we do in fulfilling our mission. The privileged place of this collective witness is our life in community. Thus, Jesuit community is not just for mission: it is itself mission.”²⁴ GC 36, eight years later, repeated some of these words, almost verbatim: “The Jesuit community is a concrete space in which we live as friends in the Lord. This life together is always at the service of mission, but because these fraternal bonds proclaim the Gospel, it is itself a mission.”²⁵

²⁴ GC 35, D. 3, No. 41.

²⁵ GC 36, D. 1, No. 9.

Second, they re-introduced the concept of reconciliation, which had already been mentioned in GC 3226,²⁶ bringing it into relief, in a way it had not enjoyed before. In fact, they formulated the faith-justice mission in the terms of reconciliation, understood as the (re)construction of right relationships. GC 35 spoke of a mission of reconciliation based on the work of reconciliation realised in Christ. Reconciliation was about His message, His actions and His sacrifice on the cross. Decree 3 interpreted the life of Jesus from that perspective. This is how the Risen Christ acts today: “he labours in a world yet to experience the fullness of his reconciliation.”²⁷ Hence the new accent in the Society’s mission: “This reconciliation calls us to build a new world of right relationships, a new Jubilee reaching across all divisions so that God might restore his justice for all.”²⁸

Reconciliation refers to the restoration of relationships and the recovery of lost harmony. It emphasises community links, steers clear from threatening dichotomies and underlines the need to build bridges between different groups. Hence, reconciliation is embodied in the task of establishing right relationships: with God, with others, and with creation. Both General Congregations spoke about these three elements in their mission decrees.²⁹ It might be said that reconciliation with God is more closely related to the “service of faith”, while reconciliation with others is more in line with the “promotion of justice”. But they don’t exactly correlate, because the various aspects of reconciliation are inter-related: “Care of the environment affects the quality of our relationships with God, with other human beings, and with creation

²⁶ GC 32, in Decree 4, No. 2, briefly stated: “The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. *For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another*”. The italics are the author’s.

²⁷ GC 35, D. 3, No. 16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ GC 35, Decree 3 and GC 36, Decree 1.

itself. It touches the core of our faith in and love for God, ‘from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying’³⁰.

Third, both Congregations affirmed that the ecological commitment was part of the mission; something that had only been suggested in passing in other previous decrees. It had a strong presence in both Congregations. It was not tagged on; rather the commitment was embedded in the desire to build a more just world: “Pope Francis has emphasized the fundamental connection between the environmental crisis and the social crisis in which we live today. Poverty, social exclusion, and marginalization are linked with environmental degradation. These are not separate crises but one crisis that is a symptom of something much deeper: the flawed way societies and economies are organized.”³¹ As can be clearly seen in this text, in the Society’s perspective, the ecological commitment derives from the mission for justice, its natural home. Likewise, creation is understood as a place where God himself is present; in this sense it is a space in which to deepen the relationship with Him.

Fourth, both Congregations were acutely aware of the fact that we live in a globalised world, with problems that are interconnected and common to all places. Hence the need for networking,³² because there is much to learn from one another, and because this is the appropriate response to current apostolic challenges, which must overcome frontiers between sectors and provinces.

8.6 A Time of Confirmation, Clarity and Depth

Throughout the years following the drafting of GC 32, discourses on justice were revisited. This happened at the Congregations

³⁰ GC 35, D. 3, No. 32.

³¹ GC 36, D. 1, No. 29.

³² GC 36 specifically dedicates two numbers to networking: GC 36, D. 2, Nos. 8–9. There are several references to networks in GC 35, notably in GC 35, D. 6, No. 22.

where successive redrafts of the mission decrees incorporated the insights and positions taken by GC 32 while giving them nuances and new tones. Some Jesuits felt that this amounted to a departure from the initial thrust. Most considered them necessary adaptations in new times.

Ever-more emphasis was put on spirituality. Decree 4 of GC 32 was criticised, possibly unfairly, for being too ideological. In reality, this critique was the product of a biased reading of the text, which does not stand up to rigorous scrutiny. In any case, the following Congregations tried to build a more explicitly spiritual discourse, something particularly apparent in GC 34. This was rooted in experience; it wasn't a mere intellectual exercise that took place during the Congregations. Life among the poor had instilled a mystical outlook in the Jesuits. In their encounters with the needy they had met the God of life, renewing their faith and their hope. In addition, remaining among them and defending their rights, as well as accompanying them in their struggles, obliged them to carry out constant discernment. This environment also allowed them to rediscover a spiritual experience. Lastly, listening to reality and listening to the signs of the times were also spiritual exercises which involved looking at the world as God sees it, discovering in it new possibilities, loving it without condemning it and seeing how God continues to work in His creation. The years after GC 32 undoubtedly helped illuminate the mysticism of the option for the poor and the struggle for justice.

Additionally, in this period, the struggle for justice was enshrined as a dimension of all the Society's apostolates. This was the great contribution of this era, which holds true today and possibly will into the future. Time will tell. All Jesuits and their works, in one way or another, view themselves within this mission and try to respond to it. This is no longer resisted as it was in bygone times. The struggle now may lie in the fact that often there is more emphasis on words rather than deeds, something

which Fr. Kolvenbach alluded to in his Letter on the Social Apostolate.

So, the social dimension has consolidated and gone from strength to strength. Educational and university institutions in particular have incorporated the call to solidarity and the quest for a more just world into their activities. This has gone hand in hand with an awareness among students and teaching staff of this concern. There has been a proliferation of initiatives, contact with the poor, studies on exclusion, public stances and awareness-raising on these issues. Today one would be hard pressed to detect any opposition to the option for justice.

However, growth in the social dimension has gone hand in hand with the weakening of the social sector, a phenomenon experienced in most provinces. Fr. Kolvenbach's assertion remains valid: in the absence of a robust social sector, the social dimension risks becoming void of content. In the recent past, the leadership has lacked the necessary drive to give impetus to the social sector. The sector's financial difficulties, the fact that it is seen as a source of conflict, and the decreasing number of Jesuits has left the sector with reduced support.

In the last two Congregations the concept of reconciliation has come to the fore. Reconciliation puts the focus on social relationships broken by sin and injustice, in order to restore the social fabric. It doesn't make much distinction between victims and wrong-doers. It doesn't produce a dichotomy between good and bad, poor and rich, excluded and included. This was one of the criticisms from those who were strong advocates of the justice element. Reconciliation and justice are mutually dependant. On the one hand, reconciliation must not lapse into naive optimism that sees all victims and wrong-doers as equals and charges them with the same duties. On the other, justice must not disregard the fact that all people are important and it is necessary to work for the good of all. Individuals, groups, or social classes cannot be

stigmatised. In addition, everyone has their own responsibilities, to different degrees. It is a difficult balance to aspire to achieve.

The concept of reconciliation contains the dream of a new society, one which doesn't overlook suffering and harm, but which aspires to overcome them and reach a stage of greater human maturity, by recognising the harms caused and coming to terms with existing conflicts. Reconciliation doesn't seek redress, rather the contribution of all to a more dignified and just society for all.

Reconciliation can be viewed either as a perspective that gives meaning to the mission or as a specific task. Taken as a perspective, the whole mission of the Society can be expressed in the terms of reconciliation, because the work of Christ is a work of reconciliation. The Church's entire mission falls within this task, and also therefore the Society's. So, reconciliation can be integrated into the mission, enriching how it is conceived and inspiring some new practices. In this case, there's no need to change many of the services offered by the Society, just reevaluate its activities in terms of the particular emphasis being placed on reconciliation.

But reconciliation can also be seen as a specific task. In a world scoured by many ethnic, economic, and religious conflicts, that bears witness to mass displacements of people and victims of wars or exclusion, reconciliation can be viewed as a particular task, which requires the Society to respond to questions it has no answers to, or only tentative ones. This is then a torn world that needs to be stitched together and reconciled; so, the Society will have to develop new apostolic instruments, a creative task that lies ahead. In any case, we will have to wait and see how the understanding of reconciliation unfolds in the medium term and how it will affect the way in which the Society comprehends its mission.

In recent years the question of environmental deterioration has also come to the fore. In the coming decades this problem

will become ever more crucial, as environmental degradation becomes more apparent to humanity and effective action becomes more urgent. Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'* has provided the framework for the Catholic community to increase its commitment in this field. To date, the Jesuit response has been timid and fragmented. In the future, it must be given new impetus and become a cross-disciplinary dimension to encompass everything the Society does. The foundations for this to happen have been laid in recent years. Given its importance, time will be set aside to look more closely at this concern in Chapter 12.

This chapter marks the end of the period of consolidation of the social apostolate. In recent decades, new initiatives were developed based on Decree 4 of GC 32 and the direction given by subsequent Congregations. The third section of this volume will be dedicated to these.



Later Developments

The consolidation of the social apostolate and the social dimension, experienced during the generalates of the Fr. Generals Janssens and Arrupe, paved the way for a proliferation of initiatives and developments. They are gathered together in this third part. These accomplishments demonstrate remarkable creativity and dynamism. They also reflect the way in which social action has spread across the Society's different works and areas, modifying the understanding of the mission today.

The following chapters present a number of areas in which the social apostolate—or indeed the social dimension—is developing a response. The first chapter covers the educational service to the poorest in society, which has experienced remarkable growth in standards and scope in recent decades. The next explores the insertion communities, as a way to situate Jesuit life among the poor by way of its communities. The third chapter is dedicated to the Jesuit Refugee Service, founded by Fr. Arrupe in 1980; a unique work in terms of its characteristics and its size. While the commitment to ecology is a recent one and is still coming of age, a chapter is given to collecting the reflection developed on this theme and presenting some initiatives to which it has given rise. The last chapter of this section reflects on networking and details some of the currently active networks. This is another very dynamic area that will undoubtedly continue to consolidate in the future.

While it's not necessarily part of the third section, the text finishes with a concluding chapter that demonstrates how the social apostolate has been animated by Ignatian spirituality throughout

the entirety of the long history of its evolution. Without this spirituality, it is difficult to understand the apostolate's *raison d'être* and internal dynamics. The chapter allows us to appreciate how this entire journey has been carried out not only in dialogue with history, but also by listening to the Spirit.

Where the Asphalt Ends: Education at the Margins

Although St. Ignatius, at the time of the founding of the Society, had not foreseen that the Jesuits would dedicate themselves to education, very soon different cities in Europe began to ask these new Fathers to found schools to teach young people. The Jesuits soon discovered the apostolic potential of these institutes and they enthusiastically committed themselves to them. When Ignatius died in 1556, there were about 35 active schools, a number which multiplied in the following decades. It was the first religious order to offer education on this scale. At the time of the Suppression of the Society in 1773, there were about 800 educational institutes and the Order had specialised in providing education to young people.¹

Whenever a city asked Ignatius to found a school, he demanded that the authorities set it up, that is, that they support it economically, which gave the Jesuits significant autonomy and meant they did not waste any energy in the material sustenance of the work. If this support was not forthcoming, the Jesuits refused to set up an educational institute. This allowed people from different economic backgrounds to attend classes. After the Restoration in 1814, the social situation had changed and new institutes had to

¹ Cf. José Alberto Mesa, “Popular education at the center of our educational mission”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 114, 2014, pp. 6–9, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

turn to their students' families in order to be able to sustain themselves financially. They were fee-paying schools. From then on, education was oriented towards well-to-do families, who could pay the fees and who felt these institutes provided a high standard of education and a social environment suitable to their class.

In the second half of twentieth century the Society launched initiatives to extend education to the children of poor families who had no access to it. Some of these measures were very successful and have since spread to a number of countries. This was the case with *Fe y Alegría*. Others were developed in specific countries, such as India or the United States. On other occasions, international organisations were involved, such as the Jesuit Refugee Service which has been in charge of providing or facilitating education for refugees and internally displaced persons. All this means that today the number of poor or vulnerable students in our classrooms exceeds the number of students in schools that we might term "traditional".

This chapter gathers the experiences of these initiatives which are currently providing education at the margins, where the creativity, hope and enthusiasm of many families and teachers allow them to dream of a new future for their children and students. One might question why a text that deals with the social apostolate would devote a chapter to education, seeing as the Society's social and educational activities are organised in distinct apostolic areas. However, as we will have means to see, education at the margins seeks to promote justice in societies, through a high standard of education in working-class environments, so as to achieve greater equality of opportunity. In reality, this is part of the great pursuit of justice. This is what caused it to come into being and still drives its implementation. It is therefore necessary to consider this fact within a historical overview of the service to the poor and the promotion of justice. In this sense, education can be considered part of the history of the social apostolate.

The chapter focuses on different accomplishments of education at the margins; more specifically, on *Fe y Alegría* in Latin America, on the education offered to *Dalits* and *Adivasis* in India, on the Cristo Rey schools in the United States and on some other significant educational endeavours, although they are not on the same scale as the aforementioned. Finally, the chapter ends with a section on conclusions.

9.1 *Fe y Alegría* in Latin America

“*Fe y Alegría* begins where the asphalt ends. Its institutes, at the heart of slum neighbourhoods, are a testament to the faith in the potential of our people, and radiate the joy of social emancipation through education.”² This is how Fr. Vélaz, founder of *Fe y Alegría*, expressed himself in 1966, summing up in a few sentences the reason for committing to education.

9.1.1 *The Birth of Fe y Alegría*

Fe y Alegría has powerful sources, bedded in the generosity of people in need. In 1954 its founder, Fr. José María Vélaz, had been sent to work at the Catholic University of Caracas, after spending six years as principal and rector at the San José de Mérida School. At the University he worked as a spiritual counsellor to the university students. He founded a Marian Congregation for the students and they visited neighbourhoods in Caracas on Saturdays and Sundays. They mainly went to the Catia district, doing the rounds of the “23 de Enero” blocks.³ There they were met with misery: “I still remember intensely the oppressive and terrible sensation that came over me as I walked

² Joseba Lazcano, *Palabras de Fe y Alegría. Citas inspiradoras del Padre José María Vélaz*, Caracas, Federación Internacional de Fe y Alegría, 2005, p. 15.

³ These are neighbourhoods in Caracas.

down the hill after several hours observing these inhuman slums and puddles of putrid water. It was a feeling of helplessness, of deep grievance, of wanting to cry. I felt crushed between a huge desire to do something and my sorry insignificance.”⁴

After those encounters, he met with up the young people who had accompanied him and reflected on what they had seen and what they could do. They were all increasingly convinced that the poverty they had encountered—material poverty, but also in terms of health, food, housing, relationships, etc.—was rooted in the extreme lack of education. So, they decided to found a school, although they lacked any necessary means to do so.

A year later, in 1955, after months of going to the neighbourhoods to teach catechism to the children, they celebrated their First Holy Communion. At the after-party, Fr. Vélaz addressed the people gathered there. He told them that the most important piece of the puzzle was still missing—a school—because the boys and girls needed a thorough school education. At the end of the speech, a man named Abraham Reyes came to him and said: “Father, if you want to found a school, I have a premises for you.” These few words would go on to write themselves into the almost miraculous history of *Fe y Alegría*. *Fe y Alegría* came into being on this very site, and its first classes were taught there.

Abraham Reyes, a bricklayer, was the father of eight and had erected a building with his own savings and labour over seven years, with the express wish for it to be put to use for the slum children. His wife had worked alongside him, bringing him water in a bucket from the foot of the hill to mix the cement. A short while afterwards Abraham offered a second premises built by him over his own house, so that girls could study.

Fr. Vélaz immediately accepted this offer and founded a school: “One hundred boys filled the room. There were neither

⁴ This is how Fr. Vélaz described his experience in Ignacio Marquínez, *¿Cómo nació Fe y Alegría? 1955–1980*, Caracas, *Fe y Alegría*, 1987, p. 49.

benches, nor desks. We found two girls, around fifteen years old, who had finished sixth grade in primary school; they were the first two teachers at *Fe y Alegría*. The children sat on the rough concrete floor.”⁵ A short while later, another teacher was found and classes for girls began. And so, the first school came into being, with 175 children and a few basic lessons.

By then José María Vélaz had already come up with the idea of creating a network of schools, something he had seen in action in 1946 in Andalusia with Fr. Villoslada’s vocational schools, now known as SAFA—*Fundación Escuelas Profesionales de la Sagrada Familia* [Foundation of Holy Family Vocational Schools]. He focused his first efforts on securing funding to equip the schools with materials and to pay the teachers. Once this was achieved, he set out to expand the work that had begun with such a meagre budget. The second school in Caracas was *Ciudad de Tablitas*. From Caracas they spread to the suburbs in Maracaibo, Valencia, Maracay, Barquisimeto, Puerto La Cruz, Cumaná and Puerto Ordaz—all cities located in Venezuela. In these cities’ neighbourhoods they found similar deprivation and the need for education. Five years later, with some 6,000 students attending classes, the network of schools was baptised “*Fe y Alegría*”. Only then was the first telephone installed in the central office.

9.1.2 *The Expansion of Fe y Alegría*

Fe y Alegría did not want to restrict itself to teaching boys and girls; rather, it wanted to bring education to a large population in need of it, many of them adults who hadn’t even had a primary education and who needed vocational training. In 1973, they came up with the idea to educate via radio, mainly aimed at adults. The project was initially implemented in Bolivia, Ecuador and

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

Venezuela and later spread to other countries. It offered formal and non-formal education, vocational training and faith education.

Meanwhile, in Venezuela the school network continued to expand, so that by the 25th anniversary of *Fe y Alegría*, it numbered 62 schools and 53,000 students. The network was reaching ever-more isolated areas, offering education to poor communities that otherwise would not have had access to it.

But things did not stop there. Fr. Vélaz was disseminating his idea in other countries and establishing new branches of *Fe y Alegría* there: Ecuador in 1964, Panama in 1965, Peru and Bolivia in 1966, El Salvador in 1968, Colombia in 1972, Nicaragua in 1974, Guatemala in 1976 and Brazil in 1980. Subsequently, the network spread to more Latin American countries, such as the Dominican Republic (1990), Paraguay (1992), Argentina (1995), Honduras (2000), Chile (2004), Haiti (2006) and Uruguay (2009). At present it continues to gradually move into Africa, reaching Chad (2007) and tentatively growing in Democratic Republic of the Congo and Madagascar. *Fe y Alegría* also provides educational services in Europe, in Italy and Spain (1991).⁶

In 2013,⁷ *Fe y Alegría* encompassed some 1,178,000 students and participants from working-class backgrounds. Of these, 578,000 were in formal school education; 59,000 were part-time or took radio classes; 541,000 were in alternative and non-formal education. There were 2,000 educational institutes with 36,000 teaching staff. Colossal figures, especially taking into account that the network grew out of such modest beginnings.

The forms of education offered are very varied, all rooted in popular education: radio classes, vocational training, agricultural

⁶ You can see the countries and number of students in <https://bit.ly/2lyVQ6H>, visited in April 2018.

⁷ Data taken from Joseba Lazcano, ““Fe y Alegría” and the Promotion of Justice”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 114, 2014, pp. 10–13, p. 10, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>. The data corresponds to the year 2013.

and forestry training, teacher training, university institutions, special needs education and computer literacy.⁸

Fe y Alegría has adopted the legal framework of an International Federation composed of national *Fe y Alegría* organisations which operate autonomously. The Federation has had a growing influence on *Fe y Alegría*'s identity, which has facilitated the development of strong common characteristics shared across the entire network. At the same time, there has been ongoing efforts to define a series of programs implemented across the whole network, in fields such as improving standards of education, teacher training, vocational training, values education, public policy advocacy, non-formal education and social promotion, among others. In this way, the Federation has managed to create a network that gives added value and strengthens the educational standards in the institutes.

In each country *Fe y Alegría* has a national office and a national director, often a Jesuit, appointed by the relevant provincial. The international director is appointed by the President of the Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean, by mutual consent of the provincials at the Conference. The International Federation is governed by the General Assembly, which meets every year at the International Congress. This institutional group composed of the national and international offices energises the network in order to strengthen *Fe y Alegría*'s educational services, as well give it public visibility which allows it to influence national policies and take part in international civil society initiatives. Such is the case with its participation in the Global Campaign for Education.

9.1.3 *Inspired by the Spirit*

At its core, *Fe y Alegría* grew out of a situation of educational injustice that left entire communities isolated from knowledge.⁹

⁸ A more detailed description can be seen in Joseba Lazcano, *Fe y Alegría. Un Movimiento con Espíritu*, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–142.

⁹ Cf. Alfredo Bastos, *Fe y Alegría en el pensamiento del Padre José María Vélaz*, Caracas, Fe y Alegría, 1981, pp. 16–19.

Lack of knowledge enslaves because it stunts a human being's personal development and prevents individual and collective advancement. Lack of knowledge puts a halt to the entire movement of collective liberation, because it adds to poor people's dependence and subjugation. In this context, *Fe y Alegría* has sought to promote justice through education.

Fe y Alegría has reached heights it never foresaw at the time of its foundation. Even initiating a project like this seemed unimaginable. It stemmed from the generous impetus of a family that gave everything it had for the good of the children. It was nourished by Father Vélaz's passion for transforming society through education. The student volunteers were surprised by the joy they felt when visiting those wretched slums and coming into contact with the lives of the people there: "they go with faith and return with joy". The sisters who collaborated from an early stage with the implementation of this educational initiative imparted their full desire to meet the poor and to serve them. The lay people who joined the project at the outset gave it creativity and commitment.¹⁰

Works that go beyond the capabilities of human effort alone are works of the Spirit. The founders felt this to be the case, as collaborators steadily got involved and the many early obstacles were overcome little by little. Fr. Vélaz considered this evolution as a work of the Spirit, strengthening his faith in human nature: "a fundamental principle: people are good, people want to help, the world has many more good people than bad people."¹¹ He felt it was possible to call upon this goodness: raise the flag of a worthy cause and people will follow it. And he was right: he had raised a flag—that of *Fe y Alegría*—and gathered together countless generous spirits.

¹⁰ A sense of the mysticism of these foundational moments can be found in the beautiful text by Antonio Pérez Esclarín, *Raíces de Fe y Alegría. Testimonios*, 1999, in <http://goo.gl/R4WXcw>, visited in April 2017.

¹¹ In Joseba Lazcano, *Fe y Alegría. Un Movimiento con Espíritu*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

9.1.4 *Popular Education and Social Promotion*

In the mind of José María Vélaz, school was the fulcrum of a set of services that *Fe y Alegría* offered in neighbourhoods. It was about helping the neighbourhoods grow and improve. The parish could be developed alongside the school to include a medical clinic and a community kitchen, recreational and sports programs, and various services for adults. All this was built around the *Fe y Alegría* axis of preschool, primary, secondary and technical education.

Fe y Alegría did not intend to be a mere network of schools, but a project of societal transformation through education. The reference to “popular education” connects with the idea that the initiative is aimed at the poor, popular classes, but it also aims to give momentum to a transformational movement that imbues social structures with alternative values to the current hegemony. As many as five International Congresses of the Federation have adopted popular education as a focal theme between 1987 and 2003.

Fe y Alegría, as an organisation for popular education, adopts the perspective of the excluded as an epistemological point of departure from which to understand reality and act on it. Popular education is its chosen strategy for personal and social education and transformation.

At the International Congress in 2001, in Antigua, Guatemala, it was said: “We define Popular Education, not by its recipients or methods, but by its transformational intention, and we understand it as an alternative movement, confronted by traditional educational practices, which tries to promote a more democratic and more just society... We understand Popular Education as an ethical, political and pedagogical proposal to transform society, so that the excluded can exercise power and become actors in their lives and in a project bringing humanity to society and the

nation.”¹² Educational practice in *Fe y Alegría* has always looked beyond the individual student, aspiring to form a new society, with renewed and democratic values, where the excluded can play a leading role. This has theoretical underpinnings which are influenced by Paulo Freire’s pedagogical approach.¹³

Hence, *Fe y Alegría*, although it has adopted the framework of an International Federation, is conceived of as a Movement, more specifically as the “International Movement of Integral Popular Education and Social Promotion”. The word ‘movement’ emphasises the idea of a common way of life, promoted in the public realm and animated by transformational values, which aspires to achieve an impact on society by nurturing it from within. In the case of *Fe y Alegría*, this movement preferences the involvement of poor communities who, once organised and educated, are prepared to transform society from within.

Thus, popular education and social promotion are interdependent in *Fe y Alegría*’s eyes, because they “share the same purpose” and because “they are two dimensions of a common goal, ‘transformation’, which interacts... in two intertwined contexts; namely, the school community and educational community.”¹⁴

9.1.5 *A Political Vision of Education*

Today, providing education is the responsibility of the state. It is the state’s duty to extend access to education to all children. *Fe y Alegría* is not meant to be a replacement for the state, but an institution that collaborates with it in this task, providing a high

¹² In Joseba Lazcano, “‘*Fe y Alegría*’ and the Promotion of Justice”, *op. cit.*, pp. 12–13.

¹³ In 1970, Paulo Freire published his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, one of the sources which has nourished the *Fe y Alegría* network in the development of its own educational model.

¹⁴ From the International Congress in Cochabamba, 2006, in Joseba Lazcano, *Fe y Alegría. Un Movimiento con Espíritu*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

standard of education which incorporates the values and vision of Ignatian pedagogy. *Fe y Alegría* wants all children to have access to this standard of education; hence its tremendous effort to expand in order to reach places the state is not present. But the network acknowledges that the state has the duty and the means to provide this education, which is why *Fe y Alegría* is committed to public education. It believes in it and promotes it.

For this reason, *Fe y Alegría* has been involved in public debate on education in various countries. It has also participated in designing public education policies. On an international level, it supports the right to a high standard of education for all, participating in civil society networks such as the Global Campaign for Education. All of these activities are consistent with the desire to extend education to all people; the limitation of being able to offer it to just a portion of them—however many they may be; and the fact that the state is ultimately responsible for the provision of education. *Fe y Alegría*'s participation in public debate and the quality of its service have given it broad recognition both nationally and internationally.

9.1.6 A Work of Collaboration

From the beginning, Fr. Vélaz engaged with female religious congregations in the development of the school network. They threw themselves into the project in a context of a growing missionary interest, which was particularly strong in National-Catholic Spain where so many vocations were awakened. The Second Vatican Council's summons to be close to the poor, which was magnified in the Latin American context, meant *Fe y Alegría* presented itself as a suitable environment in which to generously answer this call. They set up schools in marginal areas, surrounded by hardship and sometimes violence, turning them into centres that radiated life and social renewal. This allowed the religious congregations to escape the confines of their traditional schools which were

fee-paying, like those of the Society, meaning that their institutions served a particular economic elite. Likewise, they aligned their own congregational charisms with the Council's guidelines and with the wishes and visions of their founders.

Vélaz himself recognised that "*Fe y Alegría's* greatest feat was to achieve, through patience and perseverance, the cooperation of the sisters."¹⁵ Many congregations got involved in every country where the network spread.

Fe y Alegría's establishment, as has been described, was also down to the generous work of many lay people—the students who accompanied Fr. Vélaz, Abraham Reyes and the neighbourhood families, and the benefactors who made donations—without whom *Fe y Alegría* could not have bought land, built premises or equipped classrooms. At present 98% of the staff at *Fe y Alegría* are lay people. These aren't just teachers, but volunteers and institutions that provide technical and economic resources. The fact that all these people identify with *Fe y Alegría's* goals and its family atmosphere is striking.

Fr. Vélaz asked the Society of Jesus to assign at least one Jesuit in each country to serve as national director.¹⁶ He requested that the provincial be the leading representative of *Fe y Alegría* in the country. He always wanted to keep the Society involved in his work, conferring the supreme authority for running the institution to the provincial. However, the Society was reluctant to offer personnel. There was a striking contrast between the vast number of Jesuits involved in the Society's traditional schools, and the scarcity in *Fe y Alegría*, in spite of the fact that the network catered for far more students.

Over the years, the Society has felt more responsible and has identified more with this invaluable work. At present, both the

¹⁵ In Lazcano, *Fe y Alegría. Un Movimiento con Espíritu*, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹⁶ Information on this point can be found in Marquinez, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–72.

International Federation and the national offices are fully integrated into the apostolic affairs of the provinces, which have taken on responsibility for them. However, the total number of Jesuits involved is still much lower than in traditional schools.

9.2 Schools in India that Grow Among the Marginalised

Parallel to the development of *Fe y Alegría*, countless schools have been established in India in poor rural areas, populated primarily by *Dalits* and *Adivasis*. These efforts were predated, by many decades, by the establishment of schools and university institutes in cities, serving more affluent classes who could pay for this educational service. The education service for the poorest sectors has since overtaken the former, reaching very remote places where poor and marginalised communities have lived for centuries, as they still do today.¹⁷

9.2.1 *Dalits and Adivasis*

The *Dalits* were known in the past as the “untouchables”, the lowest caste in the Hindu hierarchy, located below the four large caste groups: Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors and politicians), Vaishyas (merchants and artisans) and Shudras (servants, workers and peasants). The *Dalits* are publicly identified as an inferior people; they aren’t allowed into contact with other higher castes, even though they serve them by performing work that is simultaneously necessary but also considered unclean or disgusting. They are culturally oppressed, deprived of political

¹⁷ For the preparation of this section the following texts have been taken into account, Norbert Menezes, “An Overview of Priorities in Jesuit Schools in South Asia”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 114, 2014, pp. 20–22, and Augustine Kujur, “Jesuit Education Among Tribals”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 114, 2014, pp. 31–35, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

power and economically exploited. They total some 170 million people in the country. Although, according to the current legislation, the caste system is abolished and there are legal provisions to protect *Dalits* and promote their social integration, discrimination continues.

The majority of *Dalit* children are enrolled in public schools. Here they suffer physical and psychological abuse or segregation by both teachers and their peers. In addition, the schools they attend usually lack basic infrastructure, with poorly equipped classrooms and a shortage of educational materials. The standard of education poses an enormous challenge. They go to school, but they learn little. Sometimes the school actually reinforces their inferiority complex, leading to the internalisation of the caste system and eroding their sense of dignity.

Adivasis are an indigenous people comprised of a great variety of communities that speak their own languages which were marginalised following the Aryan invasion of the Indian subcontinent, from 2000 BC onwards. Under pressure from the Aryans, who occupied the most productive valleys of the great rivers, these indigenous groups had to take refuge in the jungles, where they preserved their languages and cultures, as well as their religious beliefs. They number more than 100 million people and, like the *Dalits*, they are marginalised and exploited. They aren't spread across the entire country homogeneously; rather, they are particularly concentrated in certain states, such as those in the northeast of India (Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal, Manipur, Tripura) and the central region (Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh). But they exist in many other states where the Society has served them for decades.

Dalits and *Adivasis* are part of more than 200 million people in India who still remain below the extreme poverty level, experiencing malnutrition, precarious housing and the shortage of work, coupled with marginalisation and the violation of their rights.

9.2.2 *The Educational Service*

The Society maintains a strong presence among these *Dalit* and *Adivasi* communities. This is usually carried out in the form of what the Indian Jesuits call “mission”. Missions bring together a series of services and activities that are coordinated and mutually reinforcing: there is a parish, a school, a medical clinic and certain community services that promote rural development and the defence of their rights. This set of provisions is intended to offer a comprehensive service to these very needy communities. This variety of services allows for greater impact and better community support.

The school has boarding facilities, as many of the students come from remote areas and it is not possible for them to travel daily. One section of the boarding school is for boys and one is for girls. They are located in separate buildings. The girls are accompanied by nuns who are responsible for the boarders and certain educational cycles, so the school is collaboration between Jesuits and nuns, who in fact belong to many different congregations. The boys in turn are looked after by Jesuits.

These schools promote self-esteem and leadership and provide faith education that instils human values. They also work to build a peaceful and harmonious community environment and for the protection of creation. All of this work goes in hand with an Ignatian identity that is shared by teachers, parents and students.

This education has contributed to the empowerment of *Adivasis* and *Dalits*, instilling in them the necessary courage to raise their voice and claim their rights. Education is also helping them to progress economically, by diversifying their livelihoods through professional occupations or other jobs. Religious education has facilitated a surge in vocations in these communities. In the case of the Society, in provinces such as Ranchi or Madhya Pradesh the vast majority of Jesuits belong to these social groups.

Education is also making it possible to safeguard indigenous cultures, threatened by the Hindu hegemony. Indigenous songs, myths, stories and proverbs have been collected and preserved. Inculturation, heavily promoted by Fr. Arrupe after the Second Vatican Council, has been of particular importance.

These communities are frequently affected by seasonal migration, which occurs as a consequence of the severe difference between the rainy season and the dry season. The latter causes great difficulties for communities. Often, harvests aren't enough to survive on for the whole year, so adults must migrate, sometimes with the rest of their family, sometimes alone. In cities they frequently face exploitation and live in miserable conditions. They swell the masses of needy people who live on the streets and work for poverty wages. After the worst months of drought, once the first rains fall, they return to their villages to plant their plots. Families are reunited once again. Tuition and the increasing diversification of income are gradually alleviating the damage caused by this seasonal migration which is so widespread throughout the country.

Higher education standards also help these groups to identify who their politicians are and to know which ones can support them in their lives and struggles. They are much more conscious participants in political affairs today, which allows them to have a say in the country's democratic discourse and to defend their rights.

Finally, in some of the areas where the *Naxalite*¹⁸ presence is strongest, education is a way of preventing younger boys from being enticed into participating in guerilla groups, especially when expectations for personal growth and job prospects are non-

¹⁸ The Naxalites are a guerrilla group of Maoist origins with a strong presence in the central region of India, although they are also active in other regions. They have a significant presence in rural areas and in indigenous communities, depending on the state.

existent. Education presents an alternative to a marginal existence based on extortion and pillaging.

9.2.3 Some Characteristics

The total number of Dalit and Adivasi students catered for by the Society is more than 200,000. They attend more than 250 schools around the country and receive primary and secondary education. In some cases, education is through the English language, a practice already widespread in India which allows students to work in jobs in the future that require the use of English. This makes it easier to access better paid jobs.

These schools do not form a network but operate quite autonomously. In any case, the Conference of South Asia has a coordination office headed by a secretary who facilitates communication. Some provinces strive to promote communication between schools within their own territory.

This education service is made possible by the close collaboration of female religious congregations who cater for the girls and sometimes, as it has already been said, are in charge of some schooling aspects. The Jesuits, on the other hand, cater for the boys. This is yet another an initiative where collaboration with other female religious orders plays an essential role.

The quality of these schools, their reliability and dedication is of a much higher standard than what is offered by state schools, which is why many families prefer to send their children to them. This doesn't go to say that the improvement of educational standards is no longer a major challenge. Generally, these schools have quite limited resources.

Funding can come from different sources, such as the state or from contributions made by the students' families. The World Food Program has been providing rice and oil for the boarders, a support that has been cut back as the country has grown economically. The

Society itself also has to deal with other expenses and investments to upgrade premises and equipment.

Education is usually taught in the official language of the state or, in other cases, in English. This means that many children do not use their own mother tongue in the classroom and therefore fail to learn it correctly or can't read and write. This comes as a challenge for their personal and cultural development.

After years of elementary and secondary school studies, students have the skills to devote themselves to work that would be difficult to find in their own villages. Many of them have to move to the cities, either to work or to continue their studies. Sometimes this weakens local communities, although it is true that over time more and more marginalised groups are achieving a dignified economic status in cities.

9.3 The “Cristo Rey” Schools in the United States

Cristo Rey is a network of schools that began in the late 1990s in Chicago and which offers secondary education to students from low-income sectors. It currently has 32 institutes spread throughout the United States,¹⁹ encompassing some 11,000 boys and girls. Seven more institutes are preparing to be opened in the coming years.

9.3.1 The Educational Context

The United States is scoured by deep inequalities that hinder the even distribution of opportunity. One of the causes lies in the very varied standards of education that children receive. A family with

¹⁹ Much of the information is taken from Joseph Parkes, “The Cristo Rey Model”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 114, 2014, pp. 40–43, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>, as well as from the web itself: <https://www.cristoreynetwork.org>, visited in June 2019.

economic resources can make the necessary investment to access a high-quality educational institution, usually private; this is not the case for those lacking sufficient means. They have to go to state schools, which face several problems. Those who attend public schools experience services and budgets that vary greatly depending on their location, because the distribution of funds made available to schools by the administration varies according to the wealth of a given area. Communities pay for their own education through taxes, which determines the overall standard. In addition, the supervision of teachers is poor. As a result, studies indicate that only 10% of children from low-income families obtain a university degree. This results in the perpetuation of poverty for the majority of these people, because in the US today it is difficult to advance economically without a university degree. These people are destined to become unskilled labour, many of whom swell the ranks of the working poor.

From the middle of nineteenth century until the 1960s, the Catholic Church offered a high standard of education to the waves of poor migrants who came to the United States from Europe. These schools were well funded and the many religious men and women who served in them contributed their wages to support the institutional upkeep. This model collapsed when the number of vocations decreased in tandem with the increasing cost of education. Gradually schools had to close because they were no longer economically viable. The transformation became even more acute when the demographics of the cities changed and the initial communities, now more financially sound, moved on to other places. Education for the poorest people was facing into increasingly turbulent times.

9.3.2 The Birth and Development of the “Cristo Rey” Schools

Around the 1970s the “Nativity” model of elementary schools was developed. These were small schools adjacent to parishes, with a strong focus on personalised support and closeness to

families, which promoted access to secondary school. With this model in place, secondary education was the area that required further attention.

In 1996, Fr. John Foley founded the first Cristo Rey school in Chicago. It welcomed students from poor communities in the city's Pilsen neighbourhood. Funding was the biggest obstacle to moving the school forward, because the families weren't able to pay the necessary fees. The solution devised was to offer students waged work at businesses in the local area, thereby providing them with an income. They worked one day a week and were able to pay for the cost of their education. Managing this was a sizeable organisational task, as many contacts had to be developed with local businesses and the boys and girls had to perform well, otherwise the project would have been unfeasible.

The initiative came together and successive generations of young people were able to study in this fashion. They said it was "the school that works", alluding to the work experience it provided and, at the same time the fact that it "worked"—it was functional. As time went by, it was clear that the benefits of the students' employment went far beyond the economic viability of the institute; it gave them increased self-esteem, because they knew that they were financing their own studies. It also gave them the chance to learn about the world of work, an opportunity that would have been unimaginable for boys and girls at other schools.

The model was replicated in other areas not only by Jesuits, but by other religious congregations, who saw an opportunity to work more in line with their own founding charisms.

In 2003 the "Cristo Rey" network was created in Chicago, formed by the group of schools that were implementing this model. They identified some key defining characteristics of the institutes: the education is Catholic, it is offered to low-income families, it is of a high standard, it aims to produce university students who are closely mentored, it is managed professionally, it is economically sustainable and it is supported through the network. The network

gives the schools a shared identity, helps them progress in certain common challenges and supports the establishment of new schools.

Of all the schools in the network, about fifteen are directly managed by the Society. Other religious congregations are responsible for the rest.

9.3.3 Who Attends to these Schools

As for the participants in the programme, the gender balance is quite high, although more girls participate than boys. In the 2013-14 academic year, 55% of the students were Hispanic and 35% were African-American. The rest were from a variety of ethnic groups. That is to say, not only are the students poor, but they are from marginalised ethnic communities. 75% of them are from families that receive food assistance.

One measure of the success of the program is that currently 90% of school leavers are successfully enrolling in university. Cristo Rey schools offer a high standard of education to low-income families through a creative and sustainable model.

One notable limitation is that this model cannot be not replicated everywhere. There needs to be a large enough business community to offer job opportunities. Also, at the start-up stage someone has to carry out research in the city, generate confidence in business people who could potentially hire students and maintain these relationships over time. Not all cities or neighbourhoods enjoy these conditions. Nevertheless, there are many places in the United States where this initiative could be implemented. Its story of success will generate confidence thereby facilitating the networks' expansion to new places.

9.4 Other Initiatives

These are not the only initiatives in the Society that seek to provide education to the poorest sectors. In fact, many provinces

have tried to do just that. One of the recurring difficulties is financing. Another is the shortage of human resources.

In Spain, networks such as SAFA and Radio Ecce have a long history, which served as inspiration in the development of *Fe y Alegría*; the former when the idea for a school network was conceived and the latter in the development of education by radio.

The *SAFA—Escuelas Profesionales Sagrada Familia* [Sagrada Familia Vocational Schools]²⁰—is a network of schools created in 1940 at the end of the Spanish Civil War in Andalusia, where the educational needs were very high and illiteracy and unemployment prevailed as well as high numbers of orphaned children. Fr. Rafael Villoslada SJ founded the first school in Alcalá la Real (Jaén). Other schools would soon follow in parts of Jaén: Villanueva del Arzobispo, Úbeda and Andújar. This was the province with the highest illiteracy rate. In its founding charter, SAFA was defined as an “institution whose teaching services, always free of charge, aim to promote, among the modest and humble classes in Andalusian towns and countryside, a Christian and social education, as well as human and social promotion of beneficiaries (...) with a special commitment to vocational training.” SAFA established its own schools and incorporated others already in existence into the network, eventually reaching a total of 27 institutes spread throughout Andalusia. Currently, it provides education to 20,000 students, from Early Childhood Education to the Baccalaureate, and including Higher Level Training Cycles. SAFA has continued to follow its initial thrust, serving the most disadvantaged sectors, while adapting to historical circumstances.

²⁰ Cf. Manuel Á. Galán Marín y Roxana Rosales Migliore, “Sacred Family Vocational Schools (SAFA – Spain)”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 114, 2014, pp. 46–48, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/> and the SAFA network page itself, visited in May 2017.

Radio Ecce was launched in 1965 in the Canary Islands²¹ offering training to people with greater educational needs. Classes were conducted by radio, while students read printed material made available to them which was reinforced through regular personal tutoring. Very soon it broadened its educational service from basic education to courses that prepared people for particular work areas. Later, language and accounting courses were added. Today other fields such as technology, family intervention, leisure, health and the environment are covered. A large part of *Radio Ecce*'s educational service is online, which currently provides a broader reach than radio.

In many other countries, educational institutes can also be found that try to provide this service to low-income families. In other instances, Jesuits have established teacher training institutions, in order to improve the standard of education in countries with limited educational services, always seeking to generate a ripple effect through their actions.

The *Jesuit Refugee Service* (JRS) must also be mentioned in this chapter, as education makes up one of its most important action areas. Its services reach about 100,000 students. In 2016, the organisation launched a campaign, the *Global Campaign for Education*, with the aim of doubling this number. JRS has its own institutes, while also supporting local schools that refugees attend, providing vocational training, teacher training, etc. The variety of educational activities is very broad and all are intended to provide tuition to refugee children—and to some extent adults—that will allow them to work professionally and not to fall into the clutches of networks of violence, as is often the case, for various reasons. Chapter 11, dedicated to the Jesuit Refugee Service, will offer more information on its work.

²¹ Cf. <http://www2.radioecce.org/home>, visited in May 2017.

9.5 An Education Oriented towards Social Change

After this tour through the main activities undertaken by the Society in the field of education for poor and working-class sectors, it is possible to draw some conclusions. Firstly, it is necessary to emphasise that to this day, in numerical terms, education at the margins constitutes the main Jesuit contribution in the educational field. There are more students, male and female, in schools that provide tuition to marginalised groups and communities, than in the Society's traditional educational institutes—well funded and attended by students from well-to-do families—for which the Jesuits are best known.²² This reflects a historical change in the renewed Society, which in many provinces from the second half of twentieth century sought to provide education to people with fewer access opportunities. And some of these initiatives have been enormously successful. It must be said that this has coincided with a period where both states and civil society have become aware of the importance of education for a country's development, which is why these endeavours have received strong support.

Traditionally, the Jesuits strategically located their schools in places where they could have an impact on the elites in society. By accessing certain social sectors, Jesuits could exercise a beneficial influence which would later have a knock-on effect in the alumni's engagements in the economy, politics or administration. Much human resources were dedicated to this service and the Society made a name for itself and increased its influence, one which might be considered a moral influence. Popular education changed this idea. No longer was it a matter of reaching an elite

²² In Spain, these schools are termed either "traditional" or "classical", as is done here; they are semi-private, so the teachers' salaries are paid by the state. In this case, education has managed to reach families from very diverse social backgrounds. However, the context is different in most other countries, where the state does not cover these expenses, schools are fully-private and students, consequently, come from wealthy sectors.

minority, but of extending a high standard of education to areas where state services were lacking. This meant bringing education to the vast marginalised and impoverished sectors. In this case, impact is achieved by reaching a large number of people.

In popular education, schools are not only aimed at the students who attend classes. In fact, the institutes are designed to influence neighbourhood life, the community in which the children are imbedded, and the people in the local area. The school is a neighbourhood institution, a safe place, a space where people can rebuild connections and in which endless activities can be developed, aimed at boosting neighbourhood life, rooted in the values of solidarity and mutual recognition. In the main, its activities are educational, but they are targeted at community regeneration. This is particularly clear in the case of *Fe y Alegría*, which has consistently reflected and developed the concept of popular education. Work in India is carried out in much the same way, although in this case the mission is the fulcrum, rather than the school, which is made up of a parish, a medical clinic, community development and of course the school, which is one element within a broader institutional complex. Education has value in itself for its contribution to an individual's personal development, but it must always be oriented towards social change, to contribute to future societal well-being. This idea is particularly advanced in popular education.

It has already been mentioned that *Fe y Alegría* has a political vision of education, consistent with the fact that the state is responsible for ensuring that all children in its jurisdiction receive a high standard of education. This political concern is an expression of the desire for education to reach everyone. States are in a position to achieve this—and it is their duty; the Society is not in such a position, and it can only contribute to this goal in a basic and always limited way. This humble awareness is very important. It prevents us from investing all our efforts into expanding the number of schools, instead allowing us to implement other

initiatives in the areas of educational standards or public debate; these require a lot of preparation and resources, but they have the capacity to mobilise the state, the central actor in this field.

Popular education has historically received varying degrees of support from the Institutional Society, which in general has allocated the bulk of its human and economic resources to traditional schools. In recent decades this situation has possibly improved and greater balance is beginning to be seen. The reasons for this are undoubtedly very varied and dependant on different factors from province to province.²³ In this sense, it is difficult to generalise. But it is a fact which requires further reflection. This has meant that the development of popular education has always greatly depended on people with strong charisms and initiative, with very firm convictions and great energy, who steer the course of action and implement numerous initiatives. To some extent this is still the case today.

Education at the margins is not the exclusive work of the Society. Therefore, the numbers cannot be attributed solely to it. It is a work of collaboration, mainly with countless lay men and women, who contribute their lives and energy and are the soul of these institutions. The schools would not exist without these people who commit themselves personally and professionally. But this is also a work of institutional collaboration, mainly through the participation of female religious congregations which have committed themselves to these initiatives. For many of these congregations, the schools have been a channel through which to serve the poor and be more faithful to their founding charisms and the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council. In turn, the sisters have brought ideas, novelty, diversity and have contributed to the growing awareness that this work is ecclesial in essence.

²³ In general, it might be said that this has to do with the responsibility the Society feels towards these traditional schools and the negative impact on their good results. It is also related to the wishes of Jesuits destined for the educational field. But these are not the only factors. This area is open to reflection and discernment.

Exodus to the Peripheries: Insertion Communities

The Second Vatican Council encouraged religious congregations to conduct a process of internal renewal. They returned to their charismatic sources while simultaneously engaging with a new historical context—a fruitful exchange which led to a blossoming of creative apostolic initiatives. Forms of community also emerged that went beyond the walls of convents and cloisters and set out to the margins of society to encounter the poorest of the poor. The post-conciliar period was a period of sincere search for the will of God, full of longing for greater radicality.

One of the expressions of this renewal was the emergence of insertion communities, a movement that took religious life from the centre of cities to its peripheries, where affectionate relationships with the poorest sectors were established. This displacement transformed the very way in which religious life understood itself. This pathway did not entice a great many members of congregations, but the numbers were significant. Female religious life was much more drawn to it, although men were involved to some extent. The Society was also affected.

Many Jesuits from the social apostolate took part in this movement, because it provided a concrete way to carry out the option for the poor. The insertion communities aspired to live together with the poor and, as far as possible, to live like them. They were nourished by the same spiritual sources as the worker priests in

their desire to share living conditions with marginalised people. People who worked in a variety of ministries were given permission to live in these communities. This meant there was wider Jesuit involvement than in the workers' mission. Communities developed during this period and still exist to this day, although they have lost some of their earlier vigour, as will be explored.

This chapter is dedicated to these communities. First, we will look at the historical context in which they came into being. Second, we will look at how these communities were a new theological environment where members discovered a particular form of God's presence. Next, the transformations that they brought about in religious life will be outlined. We will also take a deeper look into how these communities are signs of the Kingdom and are part of the mission, having helped to reinterpret the meaning of community life. Finally, other experiences will be detailed, such as the hospitality communities, which are currently reshaping the insertion communities' aspirations to live together with the poor. The chapter will conclude with some considerations.

10.1 Origins of the Insertion Communities

At the Second Vatican Council, hearts beat with the desire to be closer to the poor, not only to better serve them, but because the Church saw the image of the poor and suffering Jesus,¹ which they wanted to accompany, in the poor and those who suffer. The Council made it possible to heed the call that was dragging the Christian community—and especially its religious congregations—out of the sacred sphere and away from social privileges, towards the peripheries where poverty and suffering resided, to be there in a discreet way, as the leaven in the mass. In reality, this was an upheaval that shook the thick walls of Church buildings, because the transformative scope of this shift was much further reaching than its

¹ Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 8.

apparent debility would suggest, because of its remarkable significance. Many communities were established in slums and favelas, surrounded by shanty towns and excluded people, making it possible for religious people to live alongside locals and relate to them. The men and women who chose this path experienced a profound conversion and had to rebuild their religious identity, nourished by their own charisms which connected them to their sources, but simultaneously in dialogue with the reality they faced which upended them.

The European and Latin American provinces in particular² threw themselves with great enthusiasm into to this experience and developed a deeper reflection on this movement of the Spirit.³ Similar experiences took place in India,⁴ where some groups of Jesuits felt a strong desire to go out to the slums.

In Latin America, these communities were located in shanty towns where families from the countryside settled in order to search for opportunities in the big cities. Frequently these people swelled the ranks of the unemployed, who had to search in streets to find ways to survive day-to-day. They lived in crowded spaces, lacking the necessary essential services, with poor healthcare and make-shift schools. Birth rates were very high and social problems proliferated. The living conditions in many

² A good summary of the journey undergone over the years and a good description of its current situation can be found in the article by the Social Apostolate of the European Conference, “Communities of Solidarity: Jesuit Communities Life Style”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 112, 2013, pp. 18–23 <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

³ Cf. Giuseppe Riggio, “Insertion Communities: A Brief Introduction”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 100, 2008, pp. 81–84, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

⁴ You can read about a beautiful experience in Michaelraj Lourdu Rati-nam’s, “Taking side With The Poor. An Experience of Insertion Communities in Madurai Province”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 100, 2008, pp. 107–113 in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

of these neighbourhoods did not improve at all as time went by, with some even deteriorating. In the 80s, the lost decade in Latin America from an economic perspective, circumstances deteriorated even further.

In Europe, the context was diverse. Neighbourhoods were inhabited by workers of humble backgrounds, alongside some families who moved from the countryside. There were also migrants from other countries. There was great vitality, a fighting spirit and a strong desire for social promotion. The context was one of great vulnerability, but there was a pathway towards social advancement. These neighbourhoods progressed as time went by. Through education and the efforts of parents, children were leaving the neighbourhood for better jobs. In this way, conditions were improving with the passage of time. Sometimes neighbourhoods lost the social dynamism and fighting spirit that had characterised their early years, eventually becoming areas with an aging population. On other occasions, the accommodation that was left vacant was filled by a migrant population, with new issues, often more complex ones. Hence, the insertion communities also had to change the manner of their presence.

It has already been mentioned that the Council itself contributed to this type of community, along with its desire to build a Church of the poor. However, there were other factors as well. In Europe, the communities were aided by the existence of the Workers' Mission. Most worker priests chose to live in a similar fashion, in line with their desire to share their lives with the working class. They set up their communities in areas where there were workers. Something similar occurred with Jesuits working in social centres, both in Europe and in Latin America. Many of them wanted to live in this type of community, in order to maintain contact with ordinary people and the working-class milieu, as this was often not possible in their workplaces, where they had to tackle challenging administrative workloads or deal with authorities, public decision-makers and donors. The insertion

communities opened up a space of coexistence with the society's humblest people, offering another picture of the social reality, allowing community members to nourish themselves with the perspectives of the poor.

Moreover, the separation of work and community, as was requested by General Congregation 31 (GC 31, 1965), meant that even Jesuits involved in works in the city centre could live in insertion communities. It was also the case that during the time when these communities flourished, the number of vocations was high and scholastics had great initiative and dynamism. Scholastics were sometimes the ones who sought permission for and initiated these communities, in a search for radical and meaningful vocations. Superiors at that time, for very different reasons, allowed this type of experience to go ahead, although perhaps it wasn't always looked upon favourably. In any case, they accepted this exploration.

Likewise, the potential to serve a parish in these poor environments offered a good opportunity for apostolic work. Parishes brought increased contact with local people, closer relations and the accompaniment of families. With each new venture it became ever-clearer that Jesuit parishes had greater meaning when they were located in marginal contexts, which in turn called for insertion communities. Finally, in the case of Latin America, the Conference of the Latin American Episcopate (CELAM) in Medellin (1968) and in Puebla (1979), gave impetus to this exodus to the peripheries to share life with the poorest in society.

10.2 A New Theological Space

Far from being a mere contact experience with the reality of poverty, insertion communities uncovered a place where Jesuits could encounter the Lord through their ongoing presence at the peripheries. Suddenly they found themselves in a new context in which

to interpret the Gospel. Jesus' many encounters with the poor in the Scriptures were given new meaning and seemed to become a reality once again. The stories' desire for liberation, to transform reality and to announce God's close presence, acquired a novelty and freshness that stirred community members, because they had never experienced them before with such force. The communities became a special space of encounter with the Lord for those who lived there. They learned, and the poor became their teachers in life. The poor taught them.⁵

The poor and humble Lord of the Gospel was present in the neighbourhoods and in the streets, mixing among the many marginalised people, like Him leading a precarious existence. These neighbours had nowhere to lay their head (Matt. 8:20), many were tired and burdened (Matt. 11:28), on the roadside crying out because of their circumstances (Mark 10:46-52). The images of everyday life seemed to constantly echo and relate to the story of Jesus.

The Crucified Jesus became visible in the people's deprivation, in the scarcity of opportunities, in the hardship of illness, in the absence of education and the precariousness of work, in low wages or in the continuous, disproportionate growth of slum areas. There was no need to imagine the Crucified Jesus: it was possible to find Him in the communities' surroundings among the marginalised people, they crucified alongside Him.

The proliferation of these grassroots ecclesial communities, with their shared interpretation of the Bible, allowed for a deeper understanding of the similarities to Jesus' era. Remembering the story of the Exodus, the communities' desire to fight for liberation was kindled. They identified with the struggle against oppression in the story of the Maccabees. They took hope from Jesus' life and the announcement of a future to come for the least in society.

⁵ Cf. Michael Campbell-Johnston, "Solidaridad con los pobres después de la Congregación General XXXII", in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 7, 1978, pp. 40-52, pp. 50-51.

The community members also discovered the locals' ability to celebrate and be happy. Far from giving up in the face of harsh life circumstances, the poor were able to sustain hope, celebrate and give thanks for all the goodness they received which they took as a gift.⁶ Perhaps their present circumstances were difficult, but they believed in the future. This came as an encouragement to many religious men and women. They found a new, more tangible and immanent way of believing in hope.

At its core was this: in this marginalised environment their faith grew, to find itself renewed and made more evangelical. As GC 34 would go on to say some years later, "Our service, especially among the poor, has deepened our life of faith, both individually and as a body: our faith has become more paschal, more compassionate, more tender, more evangelical in its simplicity" (GC 34, D. 2, No. 1). And also: "... we have often been touched by their faith, renewed by their hope, transformed by their love" (GC 34, D. 3, No. 1).

A Jesuit sharing his life with American Indians in the United States expressed himself like this: "Never before have I felt so profoundly the need for God's action in my life. I wait in the Lord. I feel His presence here. I see his face in the people's faces. I feel the insufficiency of my means. I feel my own wrongdoing... Never have I felt the need for prayer more than here. These people call me to pray in their hour of need and in their desire for prayer... I am now teaching an old woman and I have the impression that the bitterness in her heart brings me closer to the reality of the cross. I only have gratitude for these people for spurring me to a more genuine and authentic life and prayer."⁷

⁶ As GC 36 says: "With the poor we can learn what hope and courage mean". Through them we can assimilate "the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us" (D. 1, No. 15).

⁷ Personal account by Joseph Sheenan, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 7, 1978, p. 62. Other testimonies from different parts of the world can also be found in the same document.

The insertion communities uncovered a special theological space in which to meet the Lord, to pray with Him, to accompany Him in His pain and to nourish hope. This was an “escape” given impetus by the Lord.⁸

10.3 Transformation of Religious and Community Life

The insertion communities were a place of conversion, where members had their inner selves exposed to new historical circumstances—at times very challenging ones—and to a renewal of the faith. Those people gradually transformed. The risk of the process was that it caused some of them to abandon religious life,⁹ but others deepened in it, deepened their spirituality which was made richer and more meaningful.¹⁰ Their subsequent contributions have served to renew religious life in general.

Insertion communities make it easy to form close and fraternal relationships between members. They involve more human contact and interaction, which exposes the vulnerability of its members. This greater level of personal exposure opens the way to personal growth and maturity, although the process is not free from risk. People in these communities develop their human dimension and their faith dimension.

Communities become more open and they no longer live in ‘clausura’. Locals can come and go and they feel at home. Communities are open in a dual sense. On the one hand, the protection provided by a cloistered community life disappears to a large extent, which is always unsteady. Members live with other people and families, who are often part of their daily reality. They share their life events and celebrations with each other. They feel

⁸ José Antonio García, *Hogar y taller. Seguimiento de Jesús y comunidad religiosa*, Sal Terrae, 1985, p. 168.

⁹ Cf. José Antonio García, *Hogar y taller...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 170ff.

¹⁰ Cf. Benjamín González Buelta, *Bajar al encuentro de Dios. Vida de oración entre los pobres*, Santander, Sal Terrae, 1988.

part of a larger community, not restricted to their fellow community members. On the other hand, the communities themselves are shown truly as they are; there is little to hide. And they show a shared, cordial, generous, welcoming life, which most of the time has a positive impact on the neighbourhood. The way of life in these religious communities makes the locals themselves interrogate their own shared life.

By making changes to their external environment, these communities have also altered their conception of religious life. Vocation is more so motivated by being close to and serving people in need. Religious vocation gains meaning in this way, based on how religious life affects the least in society.

Social relations are different in these communities. Friendships are no longer focused on influential people but are developed with this new social group. The world is seen through their eyes and events are interpreted in terms of their impact on the marginalised. Looking at the world from above is very different to looking at it from below. Everything appears differently. The members of these religious communities changed their outlook and saw reality in a new light, from the perspective of the least in society. They also altered the way in which they presented themselves, their way of dressing and treating people, becoming more open and familiar.

Living in marginalised contexts also meant that members of religious communities shared in the struggles of their neighbours.¹¹ Sometimes the members got involved in social struggles for rights. On other occasions the struggles were political in nature, where they were much more exposed and viewed with

¹¹ A well-known case is that of José María de Llanos in Madrid, who became a member of the Communist Party. He explains it very simply in the following way: “I wanted to ‘live with my neighbourhood’, and el Pozo was communist, so I had to take “Flesh” as the Word, and I signed up”, in José María de Llanos, *Confidencias y confesiones*, Santander, Sal Terrae, 2005, p. 137.

suspicion by their own superiors. The Society had clear guidelines that prevented Jesuits from having political affiliations. This was only allowed in exceptional cases.

The greatest risk was that Jesuits would identify uncritically with these struggles. This had the potential to destabilise a person's religious vocation and could set them on an exclusively social or political course that, over time, would lead to them leaving the Society itself, as also happened in other religious congregations. This occurred more frequently in times of social upheaval. These were moments when the political cause could become an imperative and unseat the motivation to lead a religious life. Many people left the Society for this reason.

Interestingly, the various religious congregations that operate insertion communities in local neighbourhoods also tend to develop better relationships with each other, regardless of their charisms. There is a shared, inter-congregational family atmosphere that makes them feel connected. They share social and ecclesial perspectives, they are similar in appearance, they meet each other on the streets in the same struggles and they even establish common platforms of collaboration. These insertion communities have carried on forging their own path.

10.4 Community Life as a Sign

In general, it has traditionally been understood that communities help religious groups to protect and preserve a way of life of prayer and dedication to the Lord. The 'clausura' was a shield that sheltered them from the external reality and guaranteed keeping the "world" at a distance, which was felt to be prudent and beneficial.

Insertion communities do not maintain that buffer in the same way. First, because they move out to neighbourhoods, principally, in order to engage with poor people. Community cannot be an obstacle to this, but an opportunity. It is a meeting space, not a

dividing wall. Second, because the communities are necessarily small, similar to the families that surround them which are ordinary and often also rowdy. Religious community life ceases to hide behind curtain of ‘clausura’; now it opens itself up to reality and establishes dialogue and interaction with families and neighbours.

Life is shared in much closer proximity, which also makes it much more demanding. These communities have to assess how to deal with the reality of a more intense community life. Many seek to do this through community projects, frequent retreats, sharing of inner feelings and movements, or through the practice of spiritual conversation. They feel the need to cultivate community life in a more intense way, to allow this type of community to move forward. As a community they discuss their daily shared life and the delivery of services, and make plans as a collective. The fact that no insertion community is swimming in economic abundance necessitates collective discernment and the careful management of expenses and investments. There is a strong sense of mutual community responsibility. The common quest makes members cultivate attitudes such as helpfulness, humility and freedom, as well as patience and the willingness to listen to others.¹²

These are communities which make room for encounter and sharing. They foster truthful communication, joy, creativity and forgiveness, and the search for God’s will. They are formed as communities of discernment.¹³ These communities have become symbols in their own environments. They are places where space is made for people, for openness and sincerity, for collective thinking and sharing dreams. These are communities that work against confrontation and social disintegration; they are open spaces of welcome. These communities are “true homes for the Kingdom of God.”¹⁴

¹² Cf. GC 36, D. 1, No. 11.

¹³ Cf. GC 36, D. 1, No. 10.

¹⁴ GC 36, D. 1, No. 13.

The simple and cordial life-style and the closeness to the poor make these communities a sign of the Kingdom. But they cannot boast about this fact, because humbleness is precisely their one remarkable trait. They are a witness, which is their greatest strength.

10.5 Community Life as Mission

Decree 4 of GC 32 (1975) considered the transformation of political and economic structures as fundamental in the struggle for justice. That decree was written in the spirited and optimistic tone of a manifesto. When GC 34 met twenty years later, the texts produced portrayed greater humility, typical of a body that had gained experience, with increased clarity and wisdom. The task of structural transformation had not been successful; on the contrary, it had come up against severe setbacks and encountered the difficult nature of change.

GC 34 considered that changes to structures only occur when there's a deeper change in the hearts of people and in the cultures in which we live. Culture was understood as "the way in which a group of people live, think, feel, organize themselves, celebrate and share life."¹⁵ It was necessary to root evangelical values in cultures, in real-life worldviews, in how people deal with each other, how they coexist, in their interests, in how they value things and in the symbolic celebration of life. Be that as it may, this is something that can only be done by groups of people who already live by those values. Only communities that have introduced new values in their shared way of life can communicate them and pass them on.

At this point a fuller understanding was reached of how community life is an essential part of the mission; in itself it is

¹⁵ GC 34 D. 4, No. 1.

mission.¹⁶ It is not a restful “warriors retreat” after a day spent battling for what is truly important, but a space to recreate culture, to inaugurate and precipitate a new way of being human and a community. Community as mission.

Perhaps this community mission is especially well reflected in a text of GC 34 which reads as follows: “Our experience in recent decades has demonstrated that social change does not consist only in the transformation of economic and political structures, for these structures are themselves rooted in socio-cultural values and attitudes. Full human liberation, for the poor and for us all, lies in the development of communities of solidarity at the grass roots and nongovernmental as well as the political level, where we can all work together towards total human development.”¹⁷

It shows the relevance given to communities in the promotion of social change. It is not that other tasks, such as political advocacy or awareness-raising, have no value; they do, but this is what we could term a “revolution in everyday life”. It is carried out through communities, through groups of human beings who share life. These aren’t just any type of community, but rather they are called “communities of solidarity”, both because they practise solidarity within their circles, and because they commit themselves to solidarity in the outside world. Solidarity is a strong concept here, linked to Christian charity, mercy and the greatness of God’s love, which necessarily encompasses justice and its characterisation as a duty. Solidarity includes justice and endows it with the warmth and familiarity of the human touch.

Communities of solidarity can exist in many areas. The aforementioned speaks of communities “at the grass roots and

¹⁶ You can find a good number of articles that reflect on this reality in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 112, 2013, visited in May 2017. The title of this edition is precisely, “Community as Mission”.

¹⁷ GC 34, D. 3, No. 10.

nongovernmental as well as the political level.” It is obvious that insertion communities are part of these communities of solidarity. In fact, they have helped to better grasp the fact that community life is essential in the struggle for justice, as was expressed in GC 34 and is understood today.

GC 34 believed in the value of these communities of solidarity to such an extent that when the congregation reinterpreted the criteria for the selection of ministries proposed by St. Ignatius in the Constitutions, it determined that the criterion of “more fruitful” today means “ministry which can be more effective in creating communities of solidarity.”¹⁸

Father Kolvenbach went on to say that “community life is already an integral part of the mission”¹⁹ and not a mere meeting place for companions that makes it easier for us to dedicate ourselves to our work. This is an idea that has been repeated in subsequent General Congregations. GC 35 stated that “Jesuit community is not just for mission: it is itself mission.”²⁰ For its part, GC 36 reiterated that “life together is always at the service of mission, but because these fraternal bonds proclaim the Gospel, it is itself a mission.”²¹

This expression, which appears time and again in recent texts of the Society, is not well understood, perhaps because community life has not changed much among Jesuits, but remains, to a large extent, as it was in the past. However, the insertion communities experience this reality; they have understood this to be the case for a long time and are at the source of the call for community life to be perceived as mission.

¹⁸ GC 34, D. 3, No. 22.

¹⁹ In *Carta sobre vida comunitaria*, March 12th, 1998, in *Acta Romana* vol. XXII (1996–2002), fascicle III, pp. 276–289.

²⁰ GC 35, D. 3, No. 41.

²¹ GC 36, D. 1, No. 9.

10.6 The Value and the Dwindling of the Insertion Communities

The Society has continually expressed the need for Jesuits to be in constant contact with the poor in their lives.²² Jesuits depend on this contact to keep their concern for the promotion of justice alive. The Society believes that this is possible through insertion communities, hence it requests: “communities should be located among ordinary people wherever possible.”²³

Insertion communities are fundamentally valuable in two respects: they make it possible to be close to the poor, and they are able to be a visible sign of the Kingdom, due to the fact that they are required to cultivate community life as mission. They may be the most appropriate instrument to preserve these values.

Closeness to the poor, which should be part of the life of every Jesuit, is difficult to achieve if not through insertion communities, because most Jesuits dedicate themselves full-time to institutions which do not usually work in ordinary people’s environments. Detached thus from the working world, community remains the only space where this closeness can be achieved. In the absence of this contact, a Jesuit’s manner of perceiving reality and reflecting on it conforms to the people and groups in his environment, by no means a marginal one, indeed usually quite the opposite.

On the other hand, the insertion community context is one in which community life requires constant attention, and virtues must be cultivated that make it a visible sign of the Kingdom. Other types of communities also offer this possibility, but the environment which the insertion communities inhabit requires them to work on this aspect and pay it close attention. In other communities this requirement is not such an imperative, and often,

²² “Some insertion into the world of the poor should therefore be part of the life of every Jesuit”, GC 34, D. 3, No. 17.

²³ *Ibid.*

less time is put aside to address community dynamics. In reality, often there is a perception that this task takes time away from apostolic activities. In this conception, community is there to help Jesuits spend a maximum amount of time on apostolic activities. While this is a very widespread opinion, it is a utilitarian vision of community.

Despite its benefits, the fact is that this type of community is slowly disappearing. In some parts of the world this is simply because they were never established in the first place, and today the necessary drive which existed in the early years is no longer there. In others, it is because they have been dwindling. There are multiple reasons for this: First, not all Jesuits are willing to live in this type of community, perhaps because they are far from their workplaces, or because life is very exposed in a small community, or because of the materials constraints that this life-style entails. Definitely, the community dynamics are more demanding than in other set-ups.

Second, it is true that neighbourhoods in many countries are no longer what they once were; neighbourhood life has been transformed and does not have the same dynamism that it had a few decades ago. The space for encounter has faded away. Sometimes the Jesuits themselves stay at home without having much interaction with the neighbourhood itself. There is still the consolation that insertion communities mean living in a poorer context, but this often can't compensate for other limitations. This is particularly true in Europe, where the presence of the Workers' Mission, which had been its driving force, also waned. Where there is still a parish, the presence of an insertion community still makes sense. The healthiest insertion communities are the ones that serve as residence for Jesuits who are in charge of a parish in a popular environment. As long as parish service continues, so does the community. The parish, on the other hand, permits greater neighbourhood engagement, both with local people, as well as with its social dynamics and the general goings-on.

Third, in provinces which had insertion communities, the gradual decrease in the number of Jesuits led to the largest and most well-off communities being preserved in order to house elderly Jesuits, to the detriment of the insertion communities. Last, it is apparent that the type of community life that today is offered during formation does not prepare novices for living in insertion communities. By the time Jesuits finish their long process of formation, they have grown accustomed to a life-style and facilities that insertion communities cannot offer. It comes as no surprise that there is little demand among younger Jesuits to live together in this way.²⁴

However, in provinces where the institutional workload is high and the number of Jesuits is rapidly decreasing, the prevailing trend is for efforts to be concentrated on major institutions, such as large educational institutes and universities. Consequently, other important but smaller engagements run the risk of slowly fading away. They disappear without a sound. Among them are the activities in social centres and parishes in marginal neighbourhoods, which facilitated the existence of insertion communities. Little by little, this way of life has gone into decline, which is a great loss.

10.7 Other Experiences: Hospitality Communities

Sometimes, provinces tried to react to this loss, which at times felt inevitable. How do we maintain a presence among the poor if

²⁴ Father Nicolás pondered this question in the *De Statu* document from the 70th Congregation of Procurators held in Nairobi in 2012: “In a sense it is natural that the number of what we used to call ‘insertion communities’ has decreased, given that we are fewer in number and more elderly in various parts of the world. But we have to ask ourselves: where are these Jesuits, especially among the young and in good health, who wish to share their lives with the poor in order to enrich their reading of the Gospel and transfer to the rest of the Society the hopes and aspirations of the excluded? While the poor in fact suffer ever-more acute difficulties, if we as Jesuits were to weaken our friendship with them it would be very sad for the Society. I am convinced that such communities are of great benefit to entire Provinces and Regions, and not only for the community members themselves.”

insertion communities fade away and the most energetic works are located in upper-middle class or affluent environments? How do we continue to serve the marginalised through our communities?

Perhaps the most creative response in this new context has been the founding of what have been termed “hospitality communities”. These communities are not necessarily located in poor environments but offer a space within the community itself to welcome people in need. In general, this means migrants, refugees or people leaving prison and resuming their lives.²⁵

The need was clear: there were people who lacked housing and who otherwise would have found themselves on the street or in very vulnerable situations. These were not people in transit, or homeless people, but people who at a given moment had no accommodation. The Jesuit community could give them a roof over their heads and offer a cosy, familiar and friendly space.

For decades, lessons had been learned about living in close communities, with intense internal dynamics, which allowed the communities and their residents to grow. These lessons prepared the Jesuits for this new experience.

In the case of migrants and refugees, communities have welcomed them in, giving them living quarters, but more importantly, contributing to these people having direct contact with the culture in the host country and learning the language. Communities have also been involved in regularising the legal status of new arrivals and obtaining some financial assistance to allow them to begin living autonomously. These communities have attempted to keep these stays to short periods, so as not to produce any unwanted dependency. In most cases, they have lasted for a few months, enough for people to gain confidence, acquire some job skills and gain the ability to stand on their own feet.

²⁵ A good example of the transition from an insertion community to a hospitality community can be found in Christian Herwartz, “Community by the Wayside”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 100, 2008, pp. 93–97, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>

For this to happen, it has been necessary to collaborate with other civil society organisations that accompany people in these situations and that can provide the necessary institutional follow-up, which communities are not in a position to provide.

These types of hospitality communities have been established both in Spain and in France, in the latter case on the initiative of the Jesuit Refugee Service, which has facilitated the reception of refugees both in families and in religious communities.

Diverse support is given to prison leavers.²⁶ Oftentimes these are people who have issues, who need to reintegrate themselves into life in society but without falling into the type of company they kept previously, and who need to find a job that can provide them with a means to live. In this case, communities facilitate the normalisation of social contact, which is very different in prison, and create a space where residents can obtain employment or prepare for it.

The hospitality community is composed of every resident who finds themselves there at any given time. There are no first or second tier members, although this poses a constant challenge. Efforts are made so that everyone feels at home, can share about their lives, build confidence, serve the needs of the house, take care of others... To achieve this, it is necessary to come to a basic agreement that respects the circumstances of the diverse residents. What is important is that everyone sees themselves as part of one group that tries to live as a family as much as possible.

Jesuits who live in these communities describe the experience as one which improves the standard of community life. The task of making a space for other people, of opening up to them, their realities, backgrounds and issues, leads to a better, more caring and more meaningful community life. As St. Ignatius said, the act of stepping outside oneself allows one to

²⁶ Possibly the best example of this type of community is Loiolaetxea, in San Sebastián.

delve into the human condition and into the experience of God. However, this type of life involves extra effort. The community of Jesuits must, every once in a while, assess what state they are in and how strong they are, so that they do not run out of steam, and take a break to allow them to perceive the benefits they gain from this experience.

The most important thing in these communities is community dynamics. The richer and more open the lives of the residents, the more the community can benefit, with everyone gaining more as a result. Active and alert dynamics are a community's greatest asset.

Unfortunately, not all Jesuits are able to live in this way. Sometimes they don't have the human communication skills necessary for this type of life. Or they lack the willingness to be responsible for the different community needs, which can be significant and can even multiply. It may even be the case that the natural fear provoked by this type of shared living arrangement cannot be overcome. But in general, good will is enough, along with a sense of humour, natural human openness and the inclination to help and support others. In fact, the experience shows that although Jesuits sometimes fear exposing themselves to this change, when they try it out, they come to appreciate it and it helps them. The role that older Jesuits can play in these cases is irreplaceable.

Hospitality communities can be considered as the heirs to the insertion communities. They grew from them, were made possible thanks to the lessons learned in the experience of insertion, and they offer the same closeness to the poor and simplicity in life that motivated the first exodus of members of religious congregations from the city centres to the peripheries.

10.8 Living Together with the Poor

The insertion communities began with a movement of the Spirit that led a more radical way of following Jesus. The people who

lived in them wanted to be closer to the Crucified Lord residing in the marginalised people in slums and favelas. The community members wanted to alleviate these people's hardships and accompany them in their circumstances. They also wanted to lead a simpler life, one made more meaningful through poverty, something that they took to naturally, without fuss. In turn, the community members developed more ambitious community dynamics that gave meaning to their shared life. Closeness to the poor, the simple life and the commitment to the community were the three motivations that kick-started the exodus from the city centres to the peripheries.

As we had the chance to see, this movement brought about an enrichment of the faith and a renewal of hope for Jesuits who were part of these communities. It appeared as if they had adopted a secularised way of life; in fact, this path was inevitably one that led to a deepening of their spirituality. The life they led had more meaning for the faith; they discovered that it was more fulfilling and also required greater measures of trust in the Lord, prayer and discernment. The poor became the Jesuits' teachers, enlightening the Gospel with their values and perspectives, challenging the faith of those who accompanied them with their celebrations and hope. There they discovered the truth proclaimed by Jesus: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will" (Matt. 11:25).

Without a deep spirituality, which uncovered the signs of the Kingdom in the reality of human suffering, it would have been impossible to sustain this type of community. Insertion communities have been, and continue to be, a call to a deeper spiritual life.

At present their numbers are decreasing, in tandem with the dwindling number of Jesuits. These communities shut their doors without a sound, but not without consequences. Their reduction

in numbers has an immediate secondary effect: Jesuits have fewer spaces of encounter with popular sectors and with the poor. When this happens, the way of perceiving the world changes slowly but unavoidably, while social relationships and common interests with more affluent people and groups become stronger. Religious life is adapting to this new situation. With the loss of a space of contact with the poor, the future viability of the option for justice and for the least in society is weakened. The change comes slowly, barely perceptible in the short term, but its impacts come into play over years. Failure to live in close proximity to the poor facilitates the option's fading into oblivion.

In any case, new experiences are necessary, such as hospitality communities, which seek to adapt to unfamiliar situations, trying to make viable the service to the least in society and the desire to share somewhat in their circumstances. In any case, the lives of the excluded and the Jesuits, even if they all live under the same roof, present very different circumstances. But they all accompany and enrich each other.

Accompany, Serve and Advocate: the Jesuit Refugee Service

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), founded in 1980 by Fr. Arupe, is one of the Society's works. It is the only international social work that reports directly to the Fr. General. Due to its size and uniqueness, it warrants particular attention. JRS has taken up a significant part of the Society's efforts in the social field over the last few years. This work came into being at an opportune moment. It arose during the refugee crisis that was unleashed across the Indochina region because of the Vietnam War and its spilling into bordering countries. The context in which armed conflicts developed at the time was one where the communist and capitalist blocs confronted each other in third party countries, many of them developing countries that were going through the process of decolonisation.

After the end of the Cold War, these conflicts changed in nature. From 1991 onwards, the year when the Soviet Union ceased to exist, wars came to be marked by identity—as happened in the former Yugoslavia—or by the fight against international terrorism—the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. All of these military conflicts have increased the global number of refugees fleeing their nations, who in their exodus have lost the rights safeguarded by national citizenship and have been condemned to roam for years until finding a country to take them in.

Currently there is a growing number of people who leave their countries or are displaced within them, driven by natural

catastrophes that are proliferating due to environmental degradation. Globally about 25 million people have migrated for this reason. Others leave their homes and regions because of the violent conditions they face every day—as is the case today in Central America—or because they belong to an ethnic or religious minority persecuted within their own country. Migration is forced on all these groups, because they don't see any possibility of having a future in their own land. They believe their own homes are the worst possible places for them to live. Many of them are poor. At present, it is estimated that there are some 60 million refugees and internally displaced persons in the world, the highest figure since the Second World War.

JRS has responded to this critical situation for several decades and, unfortunately, everything seems to indicate that its contribution will continue to be necessary, given that the causes leading to forced displacement are not projected to go away. JRS' service came at an appropriate time and is still relevant today. It accompanies in order to listen and encourage, it serves in order to help and promote, and it advocates in order to protect and give dignity.

On the other hand, this institution has given many Jesuits the opportunity to come into direct contact with people in need. Many have worked with JRS during their regency or for a period in their apostolic lives. This has allowed quite a few Jesuits to benefit from a contact experience with the world's poorest people, an opportunity that perhaps they could not have enjoyed in their provinces.

In this sense, for many of them JRS has been a school in which to develop a concern for the world's poorest people and to serve the least in society. Contact with refugees, getting to know their stories and their concerns, befriending them and accompanying the 'smallest' among them, has touched the hearts of many Jesuit companions, transforming them from within. Afterwards they return to their provinces with this newfound concern.

The present chapter begins with a summary of JRS' origins, as well as its later development. Next, it focuses on its various activities: accompaniment, educational service, reconciliation and pastoral work, as well as advocacy for refugee rights. It finishes by considering the aspect of collaboration within the institution itself, and finally draws some conclusions.

11.1 The Origins of the Jesuit Refugee Service

The issue of poverty kept Fr. Arrupe awake at night. In his time, the figures showed that 15,000 people a day were dying from hunger and 600 million were living in extreme poverty. He had come into close contact with this reality and was very sensitive to it. In 1979 Robert McNamara, then president of the World Bank, had told him in person that “there were possible solutions but they were blocked by various self-interests.”¹ This had a profound effect on him. He believed it was the Society's duty to do something.

Over Christmas 1979, Fr. Arrupe was moved by the “plight of thousands of boat people and refugees.”² After consulting his counsellors in the Curia, he sent a telegram to 20 provincials asking them what the Society could do to improve this situation. He was greatly surprised when straight away ideas and offers of human, material and technical assistance flooded in. This reaction set him in motion.

In the Constitutions, St. Ignatius points out that one of the criteria for the selection of ministries is to prioritise places where needs are greatest, either caused by poverty or by greater needs. Arrupe considered that this was precisely the case and that the Society could not hesitate to respond. The reality of refugees was especially pressing.

¹ *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 19, 1980, p. 140.

² In Pedro Arrupe, “La Compañía y el problema de los refugiados”, Carta a todos los Superiores Mayores, 14th of November 1980, in *Acta Romana* vol. XVIII (1980–83), fascicle I, pp. 322–324.

On September 15th and 16th 1980, Arrupe called a meeting at the Curia in Rome to discuss the issue of refugees in the world.³ The meeting was organised by Fr. Michael Campbell-Johnston, then Secretary of the social apostolate in Rome.⁴ The participants were Jesuits who were dealing with the reality of refugees in different parts of the world, and they shared their many experiences from Thailand, Rhodesia, Italy, Indonesia and China. This sharing produced a profound impact. They realised that this fledgling service to refugees was full of meaning and that there was potential within the Society that could be put to use.

At that time, statistics indicated that there were some 16 million refugees or internally displaced persons. The largest numbers were in Asia, mainly from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. These countries alone accounted for 6 million people. Many cast off into the Indochina Sea to reach the shores of other countries. On the way they suffered extortion by pirates and the deadly ravages of the seas. They were known as the ‘boat people’ and they lived through one of the greatest humanitarian crises in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. But there were also refugees in other countries such as Southern Rhodesia—a country that was renamed Zimbabwe in 1980—Ethiopia, Chad...

At the end of the meeting three experts, Frs. Dieter Scholz, Henri Joblin and Robert Paskey, were asked to present proposals to further develop this service. Two months later, Arrupe sent a letter to all the Major Superiors addressing the situation.⁵ It was dated November 14th, the feast day of St. Joseph Pignatelli, a

³ A detailed account of what happened at that meeting and its contents can be found in “El problema de los refugiados”, *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 19, 1980.

⁴ You can find an account of the birth of JRS in Michael Campbell-Johnston, “What Don Pedro had in mind when he invited the Society to work with refugees”, in *Everybody’s challenge. Essential documents of Jesuit Refugee Service 1980–2000*, Roma, Jesuit Refugee Service, 2000, pp. 40–45.

⁵ Pedro Arrupe, *La Compañía y el problema de los refugiados*, *op. cit.*

saint who had experienced life as a refugee during the expulsion of the Jesuits from Spain in 1767, in turbulent times. In the letter, Arrupe announced that he had decided to establish “within the Curia a service to co-ordinate Jesuit refugee work... to be referred to as the Jesuit Refugee Service.” Arrupe believed the Society could offer a “human, pedagogical and spiritual” service. And this is essentially what JRS has been doing since then.

The objectives established at that time were to create a network of contacts to coordinate and plan the work that was already taking place, collect information, act as a switchboard between offers of assistance from the Provinces and existing needs, and encourage research on the refugee issue in institutes of learning.

In those early days, Fr. Arrupe said that he did not intend for “JRS to become a big operation” and that the objectives should be achieved without Jesuits having to leave their provinces. There was therefore a request for provinces themselves to take the initiative in tackling this issue. JRS would offer support, facilitate co-ordination and disseminate good practices.

Arrupe’s letter soon received a large response. Just one month later, numerous requests came in for more copies of *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 19—the most requested edition in those years—which contained the contents of the meeting held in the Curia. Names started coming in of Jesuit volunteers who wanted to work for refugees.⁶

JRS was set up as an extension of the Social Secretariat, under the responsibility of Fr. Campbell-Johnston. The first person who was entrusted with developing JRS in the Social Secretariat was Fr. Peter Scholz.⁷ Several Jesuits began to work with refugees in different parts of the world, feeling sympathy for the great hardships they suffered, but also experiencing great consolation. Father Bingham, in a touching testimony, said: “I worked for 29 years

⁶ *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 20, 1980, p.189.

⁷ Currently Bishop of the Diocese of Chinhoyi in Zimbabwe.

in India, 5 of which were in schools and 18 in direct evangelisation work, but I think I am most grateful to the Lord for the work in the camp (refugee camp)... I think I really received Christ from these people. I hope they received Him from me. And happiness, Lord, they gave it to me. I came to help them and they gave me Him for whom our hearts are always restless.”⁸ Fr. Bingham was in Thailand at the Chon Buri camp, working with Khmer, Laotian and Vietnamese refugees.

On August 6th, 1981, Fr. Arrupe, on a visit to Thailand, addressed a few words to the Jesuits gathered there.⁹ Much of his speech was focused on the refugee issue which was very pressing in the country in those years. He requested the Jesuits to make a special commitment, even if it meant leaving aside some apostolates in order to offer themselves to this ‘new poor’. He felt that this apostolate would go on to be important and that it would be a learning curve for the Society. This was his legacy, his “swan song”—as he himself called it—because on his return in Rome he suffered a cerebral thrombosis that left him permanently bedridden for almost ten years. Arrupe’s firm support of the establishment of JRS is one the great legacies he left to the Society.

11.2 Later Developments

Fr. Dezza, Delegate of the Holy Father to lead the Society until General Congregation 33 at the beginning of Arrupe’s illness, did not want to introduce changes to the initial structure of JRS. Fr. Kolvenbach, shortly after being elected General, separated JRS from the Social Secretariat in 1984 and appointed Fr. Scholz as its first independent director.

⁸ *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 22, 1981, p. 107.

⁹ Pedro Arrupe, “Final address to Jesuits working with refugees in Thailand”, in *Everybody’s challenge. Essential Documents of Jesuit Refugee Service 1980–2000*, Roma, Jesuit Refugee Service, 2000, pp. 33–37.

Five years later, the first meeting of regional coordinators took place in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand. At the end of the meeting they issued a statement that, among other things, said: “[we] are more convinced than ever that Fr. Arrupe’s vision was a correct one. It has since been officially confirmed by our last General Congregation (33)... It has also been given strong and clear support by our new General, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach. But it is more our own experience, the shared experience of those of us privileged to live and work among refugee and displaced peoples, that proves to us beyond any doubt the vision truly came from the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰ JRS has been a source of spiritual solace for many of the people who have collaborated in it since its inception, in the midst of the pain of witnessing how refugees are downtrodden and the stories of utter hardship that they endure.

JRS continued to grow as it tried to respond to the repeated waves of refugees resulting from armed conflicts. It was organised into regions to allow the workload to be coordinated. Each one was given a regional directorate which supported national offices, a structure still in existence to the present day.

In the 1980s, the most severe refugee crises were in Asia, with people fleeing the Vietnam and Cambodian Wars and the ensuing persecution. There, JRS served in simple ways by organising itself into communities composed of Jesuits, members of religious congregations and lay people who went daily to refugee camps, offering pastoral services and educational support. Very soon they set up a regional coordination office in Bangkok—which exists to the present day—in order to coordinate the projects and structure the work in the region. Other operations also commenced in

¹⁰ Michael Campbell-Johnston, “Arrupe y el servicio a los refugiados”, in *Pedro Arrupe, General de la Compañía de Jesús. Nuevas aportaciones a su biografía*, Bilbao – Santander, Mensajero y Sal Terrae, 2007, pp. 793–804, p. 804.

Central America and in Sudan, in these cases supervised by the international office in Rome.¹¹

In 1983, the first JRS office opened in the United States, under the charge of the Conference. In 1999 the office was set up to be autonomous and it has continued to the present day in a region where the fundamental purpose is to channel funds and give guidance to people who wish to get involved in the organisation.

After 1989, for a few years, there was a growing hope that the new international landscape, freed from the vice grip of the cold war blocs, would herald an era of peace and development agreements. However, very soon, in 1991, the war began in the former Yugoslavia, which would split ethnic, cultural and religious factions in a bloody conflict. JRS soon opened a Europe region in order to address the Balkan crisis.

In 1990, the East Africa regional office was created to respond to humanitarian crises in Ethiopia and Sudan. In 1994, Rwanda suffered the worst humanitarian tragedy of the entire period with the initial killing of Tutsi by the Hutu and the subsequent Tutsi revenge that caused persecution to spill over into bordering countries, particularly the Democratic Republic of Congo. Soon violence spread throughout the Great Lakes region. Several million people died as a result of the war that was unleashed. The numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons multiplied. In 1995, a regional office was established in Bukavu (Democratic Republic of Congo), which, due to its size, helped shape JRS' activities in Africa. The Great Lakes conflict drove refugees from Rwanda, Burundi and Congo to Zambia, Angola, Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Shortly after, another regional office in South Africa was opened. In this way, Africa became the main continent served by JRS. Later, in 2002, the West African region

¹¹ Cf. Peter Balleis, "A Service that is Human, Pedagogical and Spiritual", in *Yearbook of the Society of Jesus 2016*, Rome, General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2015, pp. 12–15.

was created to serve refugees from fleeing the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. By then, these four aforementioned African regions constituted more than half of JRS' workload.

In the 1990s, JRS spread to other places such as Sri Lanka and southern India, as a consequence of the Sinhalese Conflict. In Latin America, the epicentre of violence was in Colombia, a country that forced many of its citizens overseas. In response, the Latin American and Caribbean region was formed, primarily focused on supporting and monitoring Colombian refugees. Thus, JRS took shape as an international humanitarian organisation that would soon achieve international NGO status.

Activities in the Near and Middle East were a later development. Although the Iraq war had started in 2003, and by 2005 there were two million internally displaced persons and another two million refugees, JRS had not made the leap to provide services in a primarily Muslim environment. In 2008, Fr. Nicolás asked JRS to begin working with Iraqi refugees in the Near East. Thus, projects began in Syria, Jordan and Turkey. This led to the Near East region being formed, in close collaboration with the Jesuits in the Province of the Near East. Unfortunately, the worst was yet to come. The "Arab Spring" of 2011 and 2012 led to a civil war in Syria with international involvement, which has resulted in millions of refugees and internally displaced persons.¹² JRS experienced significant growth as a result, as this area took up one third of the entire organisation's activities, in terms of the amount of funding directed there and the number of people being served. Subsequently, the region broadened to include Lebanon and northern Iraq. Changes in armed conflicts in recent years, which are increasingly marked by religious identity and Islamic extremism, have meant that at present about two thirds of all refugees served by JRS are Muslim.

¹² In 2017, the UNHCR Agency indicated that there were 5 million refugees and 6 million internally displaced persons, figures that have rapidly increased in recent years.

JRS' main interventions are through education, pastoral and psychosocial services, legal support, material assistance and emergency food supplies, income generating activities and healthcare.

At present JRS works in some 50 countries¹³ serving about 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons. 'Refugees' is the term used, but many of them are asylum seekers who have to wait for long periods before their case is resolved. If they are recognised as refugees, they gain a series of rights and the possibility to resettle in another country. Restrictive policies in many states to granting refugee status—which imposes a series of obligations on the host state—means that many asylum seekers have their applications rejected; others do not even make an application because they believe they will never be granted status. Hence, JRS not only targets asylum seekers and refugees in their services, but also other people who have been forced to leave their countries.¹⁴

Many refugees live in camps, but there is an increasing number of urban refugees living in cities without being enclosed in particular areas or facilities, as groups. They blend in with the local population and live alongside them, although they lack the rights of national citizens.

JRS is currently organised into 10 regions: The United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Great Lakes, East Africa,

¹³ This number may fluctuate, because the organisation adapts constantly to the changing reality. This makes it common for projects and activities to be started or ended in certain countries.

¹⁴ According to the Geneva Convention, people who are persecuted for race, religion, or membership of a social group or political party can be designated as refugees. However, these categories do not include victims of armed conflicts, failed economic policies or natural disasters. The Holy See considers that these cases are "de facto" refugees. JRS tries to respond to the needs of all these groups, according to the Holy See's perspective. The category of *de facto* refugees can be seen in Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity*, Rome, 1992, in http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/corunum/documents/rc_pc_corunum_doc_25061992_refugees_en.html, visited in June 2019.

West Africa, South Africa, the Middle East, Europe, South Asia and Asia Pacific. The work force is composed of about 70 Jesuits, 50 nuns, 1,700 lay collaborators and some 4,000 refugees. Over the years the international directors of JRS have been Fr. Dieter Scholz (1984-1990),¹⁵ Mark Raper (1990-2000), Lluís Magriñá (2000-2008) and Peter Balleis (2008-2015). Since 2015, the international director has been Fr. Thomas Smolich.

The current mission of JRS is expressed by three active verbs: accompany, serve and advocate. The following sections are based on these three words that encapsulate JRS' work.

11.3 Accompaniment

JRS understands that its work is not only characterised by what it does, but by the way in which the work is carried out, particularly conveyed through the concept of accompaniment. In the cited document written by JRS Directors at the meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in 1985, they said: “[we] place special emphasis on being with (refugees) rather than doing for. We want our presence among refugees to be one of sharing with them, of accompaniment, of walking together along the same path. In so far as possible, we want to feel what they have felt, suffer as they have, share the same hopes and aspirations, see the world through their eyes. We ourselves would like to become one with the refugees and displaced people so that, all together, we can begin the search for a new life.”¹⁶ Here we can already see the source that has nourished JRS over the years: trying to be with refugees, seeking to identify with them and to stand alongside them as someone who has something to give, but who receives much more, in exchange for

¹⁵ In 1980 he began his service in the Social Secretariat, led by Fr. Campbell-Johnston.

¹⁶ JRS Regional Coordinators, “A vision for JRS”, in *Everybody's challenge. Essential Documents of Jesuit Refugee Service 1980–2000*, Rome, Jesuit Refugee Service, 2000, pp. 70–72, p. 70.

their small contribution. Accompaniment is an essential element of JRS' style of service.¹⁷

Being together with the refugees is a way to protect their endangered lives. Staying alongside refugees can give them a lifeline when armed forces try to exercise their dominance. Accompanying them also makes it possible to know their real needs and adapt the response accordingly. This involves listening and being attentive, not jumping straight into well-worn means of assistance. Sometimes it is simply to be at their side, which is a real way to show devotion and solidarity. Refugees' problems often overwhelm staff at JRS, who cannot solve all the difficulties they face. This sometimes comes as discouragement, like any form of impotence is likely to cause. Accompanying is a way to offer oneself up, even when there is hardly anything left to give. Presence alone can generate hope, while being permanently present produces calmness and trust.

It is not just a matter of accompanying refugees, but also about team members accompanying each other, because one's inability to solve such serious and massive problems can lead to despondency or despair. Acknowledging, listening, attentiveness, being approachable, sharing a common quest, support and consideration; are some of the values associated with accompaniment that the organisation tries to cultivate.

The third week of St. Ignatius' Exercises gives a lesson on how to accompany refugees. Being next to the Crucified, without abandoning Him, even though He cannot be freed by one's own hands, is a teaching on how to stay close to pain without running away, all the while continuing to strive for unfulfilled dreams. Ultimately, accompaniment as understood by JRS is a way of expressing God's presence. Beneath the surface there is a deep mystical dimension.

¹⁷ A short explanatory article can be found in Danielle Vella, "Accompaniment as a Cornerstone", in *Yearbook of the Society of Jesus 2016*, Rome, General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2015, pp. 16–19.

In 2013 JRS published a handbook, “Side by Side”,¹⁸ as a tool to disseminate the lessons learned about accompaniment in an organisation with a high turnover. This was a way to sustain and share the charism within the institution.

11.4 The Educational Service

JRS does not roll out large operations in humanitarian crisis situations, because there are already other institutions better prepared to do this, such as UNHCR.¹⁹ It usually is part of a second wave, when the situation is somewhat more stable, and when the needs are no longer in the absolute emergency category. It stays on while these circumstances exist. In this scenario, one of the most important services to be established is education. There are many children among refugee populations. Sometimes it takes years until they can be resettled in other nations or can return to their homelands. The youngsters risk seeing their formative years slip through their hands, losing an ideal opportunity to gain an education that will serve them in the future. In addition, refugees are sometimes plagued by armed groups that try to enlist the youngest children to join their ranks. In this case, education acts as a bulwark against periodic recruitment drives.

This education is offered in very diverse ways.²⁰ On the one hand, there are schools built and run by JRS itself. Among them are pre-schools, primary, secondary and also technical schools. On the other hand, there are state-run schools which refugees also

¹⁸ Kenneth Gavin y Danielle Vella, *Side by Side. Learning what Accompaniment is All About*, Rome, Jesuit Refugee Service, 2013, in <https://www.jrssaf.org/Assets/Publications/File/SideBySide.pdf>, visited in June 2019.

¹⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

²⁰ Cf. Joaquín Ciervide, “Education in the Jesuit Refugee Service”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 114, 2014, pp. 36–39, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>; and Boom Martínez, “Education at All Levels”, *Yearbook of the Society of Jesus 2016*, Rome, General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2015, pp. 23–25.

attend. In these cases, JRS provides scholarships and supports school teaching. Sometimes JRS even builds schools and then transfers them to states which have few resources.

Technical schools are very useful for training, for adults as well as children, because they allow people to acquire skills which can provide them with a source of income. Refugees also try to learn languages, especially English, because this can be a help if their dream of being resettled in a third country becomes a reality.

During the Cambodian refugee crisis on the Thai border, many refugees received an education. Some ended up in the United States, Australia, Canada and other countries. But many others were resettled in Cambodia, in their own country, once the war was over. Then, the teaching they had received served to rebuild a devastated country, in which the poorest people had been left with very low standards of education. Former refugees were employed in international organisations or in state administration, becoming instrumental to the reconstruction of the country.

JRS also seeks to improve standards of education through teacher training. This may be provided to educators from the organisation's own schools, or to teachers from government schools which refugee children attend. Often this results in an investment for the future in countries that have very few resources for education.

In the last few years, online remote university courses, combined with face-to-face sessions, have been offered in a number of countries—Malawi, Kenya, Jordan, Chad, Afghanistan, Thailand, Sri Lanka.... This includes English studies, primary school teacher training, business development and child protection. Humanities courses accredited by Regis University are also offered in Denver, Colorado, United States.

In 2016, JRS launched its Mercy in Motion campaign, in order to raise funds to cover the education needs for another 100,000

students, an initiative to allow the continued support of high-standard education among refugees.

11.5 Reconciliation and Pastoral Service

Many refugees are deeply scarred inside, having experienced severe, deliberately provoked traumas, such as human rights violations and war crimes, sometimes as victims themselves, sometimes as witnesses. Suffering violence such as this tears apart a person's trust in human beings, and a long process of rehabilitation is needed before they can recover their broken human dignity, if they manage to do so at all. In addition, the context of violence and war breaks up relationships between communities and ethnic groups, which need to be rebuilt in order to open a pathway to normal civil coexistence.

Reconciliation is needed then in both the personal and social sphere.²¹ People need to be reconciled with a past full of hurt and scars, and in turn societies themselves need to be rebuilt to make future coexistence possible. It is about reaching a new social harmony. On the line is whether tomorrow will bring new strife and aggression.

Reconciliation is one of the areas in which JRS has been working. Individual accompaniment and pastoral service contribute to this. The aim is to make it easier for people to express their traumas and troubles, to 'get them off their chest' so as to allow the wounds to heal. It is about acknowledging the hurt and distancing oneself from it so as to lessen the impact and stop it consuming one's entire life. Sometimes people put in a superhuman effort to leave the pain behind, just so their children do not go on to harbour the bitterness and resentment that plagues them.

²¹ Cf. Merlys Mosquera et al., "Reconciliation", in *Yearbook of the Society of Jesus 2016*, Rome, General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2015, pp. 29–31.

Sometimes this personal reconciliation does take place and a person emerges from the experience capable of committing themselves to relieving the pain of others: a person whose restored humanity and shining dignity is a beacon to others. These reconciled victims are a light in the darkness of aggression and humiliation.

By welcoming elderly people or orphans into families, generosity and humanity are rekindled, bringing out the best in communities. The feelings of being overwhelmed and miserable are left by the wayside.

Sometimes domestic violence is dealt with, which casts a veil over grudges that have not been aired and feelings of failure or humiliation. Addressing complex family situations, dialoguing, and restoring peace also form part of JRS' service.

For years, work has been ongoing to reconcile communities, promote mutual recognition, and facilitate meetings that encourage empathetic listening among different parties, who are similar in so many ways. Political issues are more difficult to deal with because disputes about the future get in the way of communication, thus preventing empathetic human dialogue.

Pastoral accompaniment, if possible when the same faith is shared, is essential in the field of reconciliation.²² The symbolism of celebration mobilises dormant inner reserves and facilitates restoration. The sacrament of reconciliation allows the experience of pain to be brought to the surface, aired and healed, because guilt in turn generates enormous internal damage. The Eucharist is a sacrament of restoring broken human relationships. For just a moment, it is possible to glimpse the dream of a reconciled human community, one that is capable of living in harmony and mutual acceptance, celebrating life, giving thanks for what has been received, sharing what each one has.

²² Cf. Gary Smith, "A Spiritual and Pastoral Work", in *Yearbook of the Society of Jesus 2016*, Rome, General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2015, pp. 32–35.

11.6 Advocating for Refugees

The concept of advocacy refers to work that aims to safeguard the rights of refugees. The way in which JRS interprets this political advocacy²³ is to empower displaced people to know their rights, claim them and be able to exercise them. Advocacy, in this case, also includes awareness-raising actions targeting public opinion with a view to transforming perceptions and attitudes.

In some cases, this advocacy responds to immediate needs or addresses long-term objectives. Sometimes it consists in opening spaces for the refugees themselves to share their consistently moving experiences which touch the hearts of all who hear them. Sometimes it takes the form of dialogue with authorities in order to produce changes to laws. Advocacy for refugees is only meaningful when it is based on accompaniment and being close to these people; it comes as a result of existing projects and is linked to the lessons learned in them.

In its simplest form, advocacy is carried out at an individual level, by taking on particular cases faced by displaced people. At a national level, changes to legislation are sought that better meet the needs of refugees. Also, at this level, xenophobia is fought and integration is promoted. There is also an international level, an environment in which JRS' activities are coordinated in Rome, Geneva, Brussels and Washington through international organisations. The national and international levels are only meaningful and robust when they are supported by information collected at the local level. This is where its legitimacy comes from.

These advocacy initiatives are coordinated with other civil or ecclesial organisations working in similar areas. Collaboration means that in certain cases where JRS cannot itself denounce

²³ Cf. Amaya Valcárcel, "Justice and Reconciliation", in *Yearbook of the Society of Jesus 2016*, Rome, General Curia of the Society of Jesus, 2015, pp. 42–45.

situations, because its integrity in the field could be threatened as a result, information can be channelled through other institutions which at a given time may enjoy greater freedom to speak out.

11.7 A Work in Collaboration

JRS came into being as a collaborative work because from the very outset many people and organisations rallied to serve the dire needs of refugees. The Jesuits came into contact with nuns who wanted to collaborate with them, as well as numerous lay people, both women and men.

The attitude of accompaniment and openness, flexibility and welcome, were part of its identity, which allowed many others to get involved, little by little. Communities were built that were home to diverse groups of people who went to the camps every day. These people were all united by their desire to serve refugees. They all felt part of the same human community, even if they differed in age or national origins. JRS made it possible for many people to contribute to this work for a few years, without needing to make a lifelong commitment. This has meant that over time many people have passed through JRS. The experience of living alongside refugees and the family spirit in the communities has left a deep mark on many of those involved. All these people continue to feel connected to JRS.

Each group has made its own rich contribution, like the Jesuits, the nuns and the lay people. JRS was built on each of these contributions. But undoubtedly, those who added a great deal of diversity were the refugees themselves, who came from so many different countries and who in many cases joined the JRS team, because some of them were hired to carry out various roles in the camps.

Many of the refugees were not, nor are they Christians. This depends on the country and historical situation in question. With

JRS spreading into the Near East, the prevalence of the Islamic faith within the organisation has greatly grown. In 2015 there were more than five hundred Christian and Muslim collaborators and volunteers—Sunnis, Shiites and Alawites—in the Near East.

All this diversity has been a rich source that has kept alive the founding spirit of openness and flexibility, of an institution built by everyone involved which draws on the identity and charism of each person who participates in it. People are welcomed and valued for who they are, contributing the best of themselves for the good of the refugees.

11.8 An International Work Prepared for Urgent Responses

JRS' founding moment was a true summons of the Spirit. The refugee crisis after the Vietnam War was a sudden and tragic wake-up call. Fr. Arrupe felt challenged by the war and simply asked provincials and experts what could be done. All of them responded promptly and generously and, with good will and much discernment, a work was developed that is unique in the Society, due to its international status and the fact that it reports directly to the Fr. General. JRS is a generous response to a dire situation, in which the integrity of many people fleeing conflict and persecution is at stake.

Once again accompaniment is the trigger that sets the rest of the initiatives in motion. Being close to the least in society and their sufferings, being willing to approach these most vulnerable people, and feeling the desire to be with them and protect them stirred the hearts of the first members of JRS. An inexhaustible source of service and continuity grew from this experience, which is still alive today. This encounter has continued to transform people who have had contact with JRS. The organisation tries to provide a professional and high standard of work, but it is founded on closeness and solidarity. This allows those involved

to cope with the many difficulties that exist in the field. The human experience of living in the midst of people suffering unjustly from vulnerability fosters a generous and full commitment, which overcomes all obstacles.

JRS has become one of the best places in the Society to learn to serve the world's poorest people, because it is accessible to all Jesuits, offers the possibility to give meaningful help, and fills the gap that many provinces may have by being close to the marginalised: it is a true school of the social Apostolate. Through JRS many Jesuits have had the opportunity to undergo a very valuable international mission experience. They contributed their skills over a number of years, acquiring a new social sensibility which they carry deep in their hearts and which they bring with them to other places.

One question that remains to be resolved is how the provinces and JRS can collaborate more closely, as was Fr. Arrupe's wish when the organisation was founded all those years ago. Actually, the relationship between JRS and the provinces differs greatly depending on the geographical region.

Once again, it is a work of collaboration, in which nuns and lay people have contributed enormous added value. Turnover in the teams is very high, which has its disadvantages when it comes to building a more stable organisation. But at the same time, there is a constant readiness to welcome new people, along with an ever-present spirit of sharing and learning in the institution's charism. It is an organisation that has to continually maintain its energetic dynamism.

In many cases, JRS activities have given rise to diverse and fraternal communities, focused on serving refugees. The teams are very international, involving people from many countries who create a home together. They are all foreigners in some regard and are called to receive others with openness and cordiality and to be welcoming. Shared life, in solidarity with people in circumstances

of extreme vulnerability, is a fundamental element of these teams that are very exposed to situations which can be dangerous and which are always very emotionally challenging.

JRS has tended towards educational service for various reasons. The Society has a wealth of experience in education and has the tools, such as Ignatian pedagogy, to offer high standards and depth of learning in order to help students to grow as people. Moreover, education allows long-term work for the future of these persecuted communities. Younger people are the ones most able to change situations for the better for their families and the communities to which they belong. In the event of JRS ending its activities in an area, if the Society already has a province established there then it is easier for it to take over the work already started by JRS.

A work such as JRS, in all its complexity, must be recognised as a true gift of the Spirit: JRS is a summons to service and a generous and sustained response which has brought the Society close to the excluded of this era, nourishing it with their hope.



The Ecological Commitment: Protecting the Poor, Defending Creation

The interest in ecology within the Society comes from two sources. On the one hand, there is genuine concern for the fate of an increasingly endangered nature, which has led in some areas to a greater care for creation and an increasing awareness of its balance, delicacy and beauty. In this vein, simpler and less consumerist life-styles have been fostered. On the other hand, in recent decades, in places where rural or indigenous communities were being accompanied, the threats to the health and survival of the poorest sectors posed by environmental degradation and large-scale development projects—primarily mining and hydroelectric dams—were beginning to be identified. Accompanying these communities necessarily involved preserving their environment. The essence of social justice is better understood today in terms of socio-environmental justice.

In parallel, the scientific community has gathered mountains of data in recent years that reflects the pressure and degradation that humanity has been inflicting on nature since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. The evidence shows the damage being caused and the uncertain future of life on the planet, as we know it, if we continue with the same totally irresponsible modes of production and consumption. This has provoked a keen awareness in international civil society of our responsibility and the need to change the dynamics of production and economics.

The Church has also reacted to this challenge of our time, speaking out against the degradation of creation, identifying humans as the ones responsible and calling for action to mitigate the suffering of the natural environment and to protect the poor, who are the most affected. Actions and ecclesial statements have proliferated in recent decades, and Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015) has offered the most comprehensive expression of teachings on this matter. This Encyclical Letter is a point of reference for Catholics—and to an extent for all the people of the planet, to whom it is explicitly addressed—when it comes to reflecting on environmental issues and discerning about the commitments that need to be made.

The ecological issue is not exclusively social in nature, but they are interconnected, given that, as Pope Francis says, the dynamics that cause the degradation of nature are the same ones that exclude the poorest sectors. Caring for the environment is crucial if we are to protect the least in society, future generations, and even ourselves. Hence it is part of this overview on the social apostolate.

This chapter addresses, therefore, the ecological question and the response that the Society is offering to this challenge. Scientific evidence and ecclesial statements have influenced the development of the Society's response. That is why, first of all, we will look at the moment when ecological awareness first emerged, around the 70s, and describe the planetary boundaries on which human action is impacting. Second, the evolution of the ecclesial position will be presented, the pinnacle of which is currently *Laudato Si'*. Finally, the Society's reflections and actions in response to this challenge will be analysed in greater detail. The chapter closes with some concluding reflections.

12.1 The Birth of Ecological Awareness

In 1972, *The Limits to Growth* was published, a Report to the Club of Rome that warned of the dangers that humanity would face in

the 21st century if it did not change the dynamics that progress had brought with it: “If the present growth trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years. The most probable result will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity.”¹ The Report’s comprehensive and firm nature gave rise to a turning point in ecological awareness and it came as a wake-up call on the international scene that brought attention to environmental risk.

By then it was becoming clear that the mode of production and consumption of a constantly increasing human population were having destructive effects on the Earth. This degradation had been caused by humankind in barely two centuries. The Report recommended the establishment of a model for economic and ecological stability that would avoid the collapse of natural systems. That same year, the International Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm, warning of the same dangers. 1972 therefore marks the beginning of international awareness of environmental degradation caused by human activities.

At that time, the scientific community was only in a position to assess the scarcity that the steady exploitation of certain basic minerals would provoke and hence inferred that indefinite material progress was nonviable. However, the scale of the damage to ecosystems was not yet known, nor the steady loss of biodiversity which was already underway, nor the impact of greenhouse gases. However, the Report did give a glimpse of the extent of the damage and warned of the need to transform the modes of production and consumption. This was the first alarm bell.

¹ Donella Meadows et al., *The Limits to Growth. A Report for the Club of Rome’s Project on the Predicament of Mankind*, New York, Universe Books, 1972, p. 23, in <http://www.donellameadows.org/wp-content/userfiles/Limits-to-Growth-digital-scan-version.pdf>, visited in May 2017.

Twenty years later, in 1992, the Rio Summit was held, in which the Declaration on Forest Principles, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change were signed. The latter indicated the need to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, and its development would lead to the signing of the Kyoto Protocol, in 1997, which entered into force in 2005.

Therefore, by the beginning of the 1990s, there was increased awareness of the importance of the environmental issue and a significant international scientific consensus on the major ecological categories in question. Then, as now, the missing link was that states were reticent to acknowledge the facts and did not have the political will to adopt measures that would be costly. But it had already been demonstrated that the problem was a global one, because it affected all countries—albeit in markedly different ways—and that the solution required a collective response.

12.2 The Planetary Boundaries

Over the years, knowledge about what is happening on the planet has reached a higher degree of maturity. In 2009 Johan Rockström and Will Steffen² defined the planetary boundaries that must not be passed if human life is to remain within a safe operating space. These are nine boundaries which indicate the broad areas to take into consideration.³

The first boundary is climate change, caused by the emission of greenhouse gases, which is causing an increase in the temperature

² Johan Rockström, Will Steffen et al., “Planetary boundaries: exploring the safe operating space for humanity”, in *Ecology and Society*, 14 (2), art. 32 (2009), in <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/download/18.8615c78125078c8d3380002197/ES-2009-3180.pdf>, visited in June 2017.

³ A good explanation can be found in Jeffrey Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development*, Columbia University Press, 2015, in chap. VI, Planetary Boundaries.

of the planet. The gases involved are mainly carbon dioxide, methane and nitrogen oxide. The burning of fossil fuels and deforestation are the largest human contributions of these gases. To date, the average temperature of the Earth has increased by 0.9°C since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. If drastic changes are not introduced in the mode of production and consumption, by the end of 21st century the temperature will have gone up several degrees—2°, 3° or even 4°, depending on human activity—with catastrophic impacts on human life that are not even possible to predict.

The Paris Agreement negotiated in 2015 at the 21st Conference on Climate Change (COP 21) achieved international consensus on limiting the rise in the average temperature of the planet to 2°C by the end of the 21st century. Although there were more than 190 signatory countries, the voluntary commitments adopted individually by each of them are not sufficient to achieve the proposed objective. Further efforts will be needed, especially by the most polluting countries.

The fight against climate change requires an energy transition that reduces the burning of fossil fuels in exchange for electricity production by renewable energies (wind, solar, hydroelectric, tidal...). The problem is that today most energy comes from the burning of fossil fuels and the transition, though technically viable, is expensive. In addition, the big oil companies put pressure on governments to allow them to continue their activities unhindered. Current economic progress depends to a large extent on the use of these fuels. Consequently, the necessary and inevitable transformation will encounter enormous obstacles and delays.

The second planetary boundary is ocean acidification, a phenomenon closely linked to the previous one, because it is precisely the absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into the sea water that produces this acidification. At present, ocean water is already 26% more acidic than in pre-industrial times, which harms

the shell formation of molluscs, corals, crustaceans and plankton, thus endangering their very existence.

The third boundary refers to the depletion of the ozone layer, which limits the penetration of ultraviolet rays into the atmosphere, which are very hazardous for human health because they are potent causes of skin cancers and other diseases. Ozone reduction is mainly caused by chlorofluorocarbon gases (CFCs). In the mid-eighties evidence came to light of the hole in the ozone layer that was opening up over Antarctica. NASA images showed its enormous dimensions. The international community reacted immediately in that decade and moved to replace these gases in order to limit the depletion of the ozone layer. Since the year 2000 the layer has started to recover, so these measures were very successful. The hole is expected to disappear by the year 2050. This is an example of the beneficial effects of collective international action.

The fourth boundary is the nitrogen and phosphorus cycle, two elements that are appearing in far higher proportions due to the use of chemical fertilisers. Their use has increased agricultural efficiency between 7 and 10 times, meaning that today humanity depends on these chemicals for its survival. However, a large amount of nitrogen and phosphorus is not absorbed by crops, and ends up in aquifers, flowing onwards into rivers and oceans, altering ecosystems and triggering algal blooms. When algae die, they are consumed by bacteria that produce vast deoxygenated areas, in which marine species are unable to survive. These are called dead zones.

The fifth boundary hones in on freshwater usage, a scarce resource. Of the total human freshwater consumption, 70% is related to agriculture, 20% to industrial uses and 10% to households. The exploitation of this resource is increasing. We are extracting water from the aquifers at unsustainable rates, meaning that we are currently consuming reserves at such high speeds that rainfall is not able to replenish them. The demand for fresh water increases every year. Changes in climate patterns due to global warming will

cause more severe shortages, both due to droughts and floods that devastate the soil which prevents water from being retained.

The sixth boundary refers to land use. A large amount of land is used for arable farmland, pasture for animals, building and logging. The result is that less carbon dioxide is absorbed by forests. Moreover, ecosystems are destroyed, many others are weakened and the survival of many species is endangered.

The seventh boundary involves the reduction of biodiversity. Many species are endangered or at risk of extinction, and experts say that we are facing the sixth great mass extinction in the history of life on Earth. Ecosystems are complex environments supported by delicate balances. As species disappear, this equilibrium will be broken, with consequences that the scientific community is unable to predict. The decrease in biodiversity is caused by a set of factors, such as climate change, land use, deforestation, the proliferation of invasive species, overpopulation and the growth of cities: a process that can be slowed down, but not stopped.

The eighth boundary involves air pollution from industry with very small particles filtering into the lungs, settling in the alveoli and causing severe respiratory diseases and increased mortality rates. This phenomenon exists in large industrial areas.

The last boundary deals with chemical pollution generated by industrial production. The petrochemical industry, and manufacturing and mining activities lead to massive pollution causing great damage to the wellbeing of human communities.

Of these nine boundaries, some have already been crossed, such as biodiversity loss and excessive nitrogen in natural cycles. Others still remain under control, such as climate change. However, this is an irreversible process and the challenge remains to prevent it from developing further. Given this scenario, it is now evident that the human family is facing a complex and dangerous crossroads that will define the way in which humanity must evolve in the future.

In debates, the voice of future generations is lacking, on whose shoulders the weight of the ecological debts that are currently being incurred will fall. The participation of the poorest in society is also lacking, who are already the most affected at present. If these people were part of decision-making, they would not allow the world to be destroyed as flippantly as it is now.

12.3 Awareness within the Church

In 1971, Pope Paul VI published his Encyclical *Octogesima Adveniens* on the event of the 80th anniversary of the publication of the *Rerum Novarum*.⁴ In this document, number 21 was dedicated to the environment in which it stated: “by an ill-considered exploitation of nature [man] risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation. Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace—pollution and refuse, new illness and absolute destructive capacity—but the human framework is no longer under man’s control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable.” This was the first display of awareness in the ecclesial field, coinciding—in fact slightly predating—with the Report to the Club of Rome already mentioned.

In 1987, Pope John Paul II called for a moral lens to be focused on nature, the “cosmos” he called it, which deserves respect. He based this on a threefold consideration: first, beings cannot be arbitrarily utilised for economic reasons, because they have intrinsic value. It is crucial to take into account the nature of each being and the connection between them all. Second, resources are limited; they cannot be used as if they were inexhaustible, thus depriving future generations of them. Third, inappropriate usage causes environmental pollution, which

⁴ Article in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, “Custodire l’intera creazione. Un servizio del Vescovo di Roma”, in *Civiltà Cattolica* No. 3960, 2015 (II), pp. 537–551.

deteriorates the quality of life for people. Hence there is a moral obligation. This was published in his Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (No. 34).

In 1990, he issued his Message for the 23rd World Day for Peace, which was entitled *Peace with God The Creator, Peace with all of Creation*.⁵ Many of the environmental issues appeared in this text, already at that stage discussed with a level of maturity. The text mentioned the problems to be faced, such as the hole in the ozone layer, climate change due to the emission of greenhouse gases, industrial waste, uncontrolled deforestation and the exploitation of resources.

In this Message, as in other communiques from John Paul II, he pointed out the ethical dimension of ecological challenges. In his eyes, environmental degradation was a moral issue (No. 15). He recalled the importance of respecting life and in particular human dignity (No. 7). Thus, he linked the environmental challenge to the concern of safeguarding life for all human beings. He thought that this historical challenge presented an opportunity to develop unprecedented international solidarity (No. 10).

John Paul II unified the care for creation with the defence of the poorest in society (Nos. 10-11), something that subsequent doctrine would insist on. He felt that richer states had a greater responsibility and that they had to accept this fact. He called for extreme poverty to be addressed, which can lead to the natural environment being over-exploited and becoming depleted.

Among the solutions, he called for life-style change, the need to teach environmental responsibility (No. 13) and to contemplate nature with admiration in order to be able to be thankful and care for it (No. 14).

⁵ It can be found in http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html, visited in June 2019.

Shortly after, in the Encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (1991)⁶ he affirmed that the problem of consumerism is rooted in the destruction of the environment, as well as a serious anthropological error, according to which the human being thinks that they can freely dispose of things, when in fact, as they are a gift of God, they have their own intrinsic form and purpose, which the human being can develop, but not betray (No. 37). John Paul II contrasted the narrowness of the human being's outlook, with the selfless and altruistic attitude born of wonder for being and beauty, which enables one to see, in all that is visible, the message of the invisible God who created all things (No. 37).

In this same Encyclical John Paul II introduced the concept of "human ecology" (No. 38), because God not only gifted things to the human being, but the very human was a gift, hence humanity must respect the natural and moral structure. That is why John Paul II discussed dealing with the problems of urbanisation and the "social ecology" of work. He called for the building, with patience and courage, of more authentic forms of life in community. In his eyes, improving the world required profound changes of "lifestyles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies" (No. 58). In the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*⁷ (1995), he emphasised that when it comes to the natural world, human beings are subject to moral laws and not only biological ones, which cannot be violated with impunity (No. 42).

In short, with St. John Paul II, ecological concerns already included human dimensions and demanded a moral response: there

⁶ It can be found in https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html, visited in June 2019.

⁷ It can be found in http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html, visited in June 2019.

are ethical obligations that cannot be ignored, given that reality, which is the gift of God, is objective. In the face of destructive possessiveness, John Paul II proposed admiration and unselfishness which lead to God.

Benedict XVI came to be defined as the “first green Pope”,⁸ because he took up many of the questions proposed by his successor, developing them thereafter.⁹ In his Message for the 40th World Day for Peace (2007)¹⁰ he formulated a triad that has remained intact ever since: natural ecology (respect for nature), human ecology and social ecology. “Experience shows that disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence, and vice versa” (No. 8). In the same message he indicated that the destruction of the environment was based on an inhumane concept—not merely an erroneous one—of development.

In the Message for the 43rd World Day for Peace (2010)¹¹ he mentioned the dangers to which nature is subject, with “such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions” (No. 4). He also referred to the forced displacement of human communities caused by environmental deterioration, who he termed “environmental refugees” (No. 4).

⁸ Daniel Stone, “How green was the “green Pope”?”, in *National Geographic News*, 2013, in <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/02/130228-environmental-pope-green-efficiency-vatican-city/>, visited in June 2017.

⁹ Cf. Benedict XVI, *The Environment*, Indiana, Our Sunday visitor, 2012.

¹⁰ It was titled *The Human Person, The Heart of Peace*, and can be found in http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20061208_xl-world-day-peace.html, visited in June 2019.

¹¹ It was titled *If You Want To Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*, and can be found http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace.html, visited in May 2019.

In his social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (2009)¹² he brought together the ecological, legal, economic, political and cultural spheres (No. 48). He said that the way in which human beings treat nature influences how they treat themselves: “Nature, especially in our time, is so integrated into the dynamics of society and culture that by now it hardly constitutes an independent variable. Desertification and the decline in productivity in some agricultural areas are also the result of impoverishment and underdevelopment among their inhabitants. When incentives are offered for their economic and cultural development, nature itself is protected. Moreover, how many natural resources are squandered by wars! Peace in and among peoples would also provide greater protection for nature. The hoarding of resources, especially water, can generate serious conflicts among the peoples involved. Peaceful agreement about the use of resources can protect nature and, at the same time, the well-being of the societies concerned” (No. 51). The interconnected relationship between the care of creation and the care of the human being was reaffirmed. Both realities are intrinsically linked. He also reminded that resources exist for all human beings and that those resources are in fact intended to be for everyone.

There is also an ecclesial responsibility: “The Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere. In so doing, she must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction. There is need for what might be called a human ecology, correctly understood” (No. 51).

In the General Audience of August 26th, 2009,¹³ Benedict indicated that the development model should be transformed

¹² It can be found in http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html, visited in May 2019.

¹³ It was titled *Safeguarding of Creation*, and can be found in http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20090826.html, visited in June 2019.

through the acceptance of responsibility for the environment, as is demanded by environmental factors, but also by the scandal of hunger and misery.

12.4 The Impact of Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'*

In June 2015, Pope Francis published his Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, *On Care for Our Common Home* (LS), which presented his thoughts in an articulated way on environmental degradation. Although it is not possible to summarise the contents of such a rich and carefully prepared document in a few paragraphs, some of the most relevant elements of LS are given here.¹⁴

The desire was for the text to participate in a global dialogue on environmental issues. In fact, it entailed the papal contribution to this dialogue. Hence, the document was addressed to “every person living on this planet” (No. 3), because if the problem affects us all, then everyone has a part to play solving it; everyone has something to contribute. In addition, the Encyclical was published months before the 21st Conference on Climate Change (COP 21) held in Paris in 2015, with the express purpose of presenting the Catholic Church's reflection on environmental issues to the world authorities gathered there.

In fact, dialogue is among the solutions proposed, and the fifth chapter is entirely dedicated to this topic. It expresses the need for dialogue on the environment in international politics, calls for debate and the establishment of new national and local policies, reiterates the requirement for dialogue and transparency in decision-making processes, encourages politics and the economy to dialogue in search for human fulfilment and calls

¹⁴ In addition to the text of the Encyclical, extensive and detailed commentaries appeared shortly after its publication, both in journals with monographic editions and in books. Standing out for the variety of perspectives is Fernando Chica and Carlos Granados (eds.), *Loado seas, mi Señor*, Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2015.

for dialogue between religion and science. These are in fact the headings around which the chapter is developed. For Pope Francis “Dialogue is not negotiating. Negotiation is trying to obtain one’s “slice” of the common pie. This is not what I mean. It is seeking the common good for all. Discussing together... thinking about better solutions for all.”¹⁵ Dialogue is a form of encounter,¹⁶ which is among the most powerful tools available to human beings when facing common problems. In reality, Pope Francis has enormous confidence in dialogue which should be the fundamental exercise of politics, whose role it is to ensure the common good.¹⁷ He wants to engage generous and open politics, and the dialogue that goes with it, in order to work for a solution to environmental problems.

LS is not strictly speaking an encyclical that could be termed “green”, in the sense that it is not confined to environmental issues. Pope Francis’s point of departure is the conviction that the current problems faced by the world are simultaneously social and ecological: “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental” (LS 139). And therefore, it must be tackled at the same time and from both angles. In fact, it is the poor who today suffer the most severe consequences of environmental degradation (LS 48). Hence, “a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (LS 49).

¹⁵ Pope Francis, *Meeting with the Participants in the Fifth Convention of the Italian Church*, Florence, November 10th, 2015, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151110_firenze-convegno-chiesa-italiana.html, visited May 2019.

¹⁶ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), 2013, No. 253, in http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html, visited in June 2019.

¹⁷ Cf. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* No. 240.

The Pope proposes, in response to this crisis, what he will call “integral ecology”,¹⁸ which in addition to the care of creation encompasses a range of areas: the protection of indigenous communities and the cultural wealth of humanity, the improvement of human living standards, the cultivation of an ecology of the human being, solidarity with the poor and intergenerational justice. It is a comprehensive concept that encompasses the different dimensions of life. The term is in tune with previous Popes’ conception of ecology, in which they always included the human perspective, because the human being is also part of life.

The document contains some aspects that span across all the other areas and surface repeatedly in the chapters. These are concisely detailed in No. 16, as well as in the first prayer—*A Prayer for Our Earth*, for “all who believe in a God who is the all-powerful Creator” (LS 246)—which is included at the end of the text. Some of these recurring themes are: the relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the need for ecological conversion, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of the forms of power derived from technology, the intrinsic value of all realities, however insignificant they may seem, the presence of God in each creature and the proposal of a new way of life. These realities are constantly reconsidered and enriched throughout the discourse.

The assessment presented in LS on environmental degradation is taken from the scientific community’s current consensus and is found in the first chapter, *What is Happening to our Common Home*. It highlights the problems of pollution and waste, climate change, the extinction of biodiversity and the decreasing availability of water for all. Scientific statements are the starting point on which the text’s discourse is built, which is a novel way of structuring an Encyclical.

¹⁸ Chapter four of LS, *Integral Ecology* (Nos. 137–162).

The Pope goes beyond describing what is happening and ventures into exploring the roots of the ecological crisis, which he attributes to humankind.¹⁹ He delves into what he calls the technocratic paradigm, whereby those who have economic power use technology to subjugate the natural and human world (LS 104). He also refers to the throwaway culture (LS 22), which has come to consider it natural to discard natural and human realities in excess and use them for one's own benefit. Essentially this is a manifestation of human sin expressed in the "destructive power in wars, the various forms of violence and abuse, the abandonment of the most vulnerable, and attacks on nature" (LS 66).

But perhaps the most thought-provoking aspect of the Encyclical is found in its presentation of the mystical dimension. The text addresses the question of the motivation to care for the environment and the poor, and it does so by going to the roots of the Christian vocation. In fact, what Pope Francis proposes is not so much a change in the way of acting but in the way of being, in our perception of who we are and why we exist. Hence, he affirms that "There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself. There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology" (LS 118). So, he believes that a cultural revolution is necessary (LS 114). For this reason, he goes on to propose "a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a [new] life-style and a spirituality" (LS 111). This cannot be realised without the required "spirituality capable of inspiring us" (LS 216), which requires people to be able to see the world in a new way: "the mystic experiences the intimate connection between God and all beings, and thus feels that 'all things are God'" (LS 234).

He proposes the cultivation of sound virtues (LS 211): responsible simplicity of life, grateful contemplation of the world and

¹⁹ This analysis is mainly found in the third chapter, *The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis* (Nos. 101–136).

care for the fragility of the poor and the environment (LS 214). He repeats that new “life-styles, production and consumption” are necessary (LS 23), as well a change of the “models of global development” (LS 194). In essence he is putting forward a new way of life: “Even living on little, [people] can live a lot, above all when they cultivate other pleasures and find satisfaction in fraternal encounters, in service, in developing their gifts, in music and art, in contact with nature, in prayer” (LS 223).

Although the Encyclical addresses issues that cast long dark shadows on the future of humanity, it is motivated by hope: “Eternal life will be a shared experience of awe, in which each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place and have something to give those poor men and women who will have been liberated once and for all” (LS 243).

12.5 Reflections on Ecology in the Society

The Society has by no means stayed at the side-lines of this scientific and ecclesial reflection on environmental degradation; rather, over the years it has been developing its own thinking which is covered in this section.²⁰ In the next one, the area of ecological action will be addressed.

General Congregation 33 (1983) pointed out that the “lack of respect for a loving Creator leads to a denial of the dignity of the human person and the wanton destruction of the environment” (D. 1, No. 35). This brief mention was the first showing of interest and concern for the environment in the Society’s official texts.

At the Congregation of Provincials in 1990, Fr. Kolvenbach stated in his Report on the State of the Society that he sensed

²⁰ Up to 1999, the timeline presented here basically follows “We live in a Broken World, Reflections on Ecology”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 70, 1999, pp. 69–71, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

an ecological awareness in most social centres which had not previously been apparent.²¹

In July 1992, a group of six Jesuits from different conferences working in the environmental field went to Rio de Janeiro to attend the United Nations World Conference on the Environment.

During the preparation of the General Congregation 34 (1995) seventeen provinces approved nineteen postulates on ecology.²² Some of these stressed the mutual relationship between the promotion of justice and the challenge of environmental degradation. The feeling was that the option for the poor and the option for the Earth were inseparable, as natural degradation particularly affects the poorest people. Others underlined the links between the spirituality of the Exercises and the concern for the integrity of creation. These postulates already contained proposals for action: changes to Jesuit life-styles, the renewal of theological reflection, research on environmental problems and the incorporation of the ecological perspective in all ministries. These are all areas that have been developing over the years, showing that those postulates were pioneering.

Although GC 34 wanted to give expression to these postulates, it encountered difficulties because time was limited and it was not possible to source specialists and existing research, which were unavailable at that time. Hence, it was agreed to make a brief, one-page recommendation to the Fr. General which was formed into a decree: Decree 20. It requested an exploration into how Ignatian spirituality provides a foundation for a universal response, and research on how this perspective might be incorporated into the Society's institutions and favour collaboration between them. The Decree also recommended a reflection be carried out on how

²¹ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "Relatio P. Generalis 'De Statu Societatis'", in *Acta Romana* vol. XX (1988–1993), fascicle III, 1990, pp. 447–490, p. 467.

²² A reference to them can be found in the introduction to Decree 20 of General Congregation 34 dedicated to ecology. See p. 363 of the Spanish edition of the Congregation decrees.

this question affects the Jesuit life-style. Thus, the task was to research these questions that which would orient a new way of proceeding.

However, other decrees from GC 34 were peppered with environmental concerns. Decree 3 - Our Mission and Justice - dedicated No. 9 to the ecological concern. It unified the interest for the environment with justice for the poor and future generations: "Unscrupulous exploitation of natural resources and the environment degrades the quality of life; it destroys cultures and sinks the poor in misery". Decree 5—Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue—encouraged all Jesuits to collaborate with "all men and women of goodwill" in respect for creation (D. 5, No. 2). It also requested that the protection of the environment be carried out "in collaboration with believers of other religions" (D. 5, No. 8), because all religions have contributed to the degradation of nature.

The Complementary Norms approved during GC 34 included the "protection of the environment" (CN 247 §1) among the new requirements of the mission related to the promotion of justice, thus reflecting the awareness that already existed at that time.

Immediately after GC 34, the study requested of the Fr. General commenced, which was finally collected in the document "We Live in a Broken World."²³ This document marks a milestone in the overall awareness of the ecological issue. It was produced by the Secretariat for Social Justice, then directed by Fr. Michael Czerny SJ.

The document's table of contents followed the guidelines provided by GC 34 for the preparation of the study. Thus, three chapters dealt with the three proposed fields: the Ignatian foundations of the Society's environmental response, apostolic contributions and collaboration, and how the environmental concern informs life-

²³ In *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 70, *op. cit.*

style and institutional decisions. Two extra chapters were added: a preliminary one outlining the consensus of scientific analyses and interpretations according to Jesuit experts in these fields. It was desired for the reading of reality to be carried out in dialogue with science. As we have seen, the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* did the same years later. A concluding chapter was also incorporated into the document.

Between 1999 and GC 35 (2008) environmental awareness in the world was growing and the Millennium Development Goals were developed in 2000, as a declaration of the international consensus on the great challenges facing humanity. Out of a total of eight objectives, the seventh one referred to the need to safeguard the sustainability of the environment. This context prepared the ground for GC 35.

GC 35, like its predecessor, received a remarkable number of postulates on ecology and deemed it necessary to include this concern in the decrees. This was not done by developing a decree exclusively dedicated to environmental care; rather it incorporated the ecological commitment as another dimension of the mission. Decree 3—Challenges for our Mission Today—served this purpose, and it introduced the need to work for reconciliation with God, with others and with creation. What was new was that, from then on, ecology would no longer be just another aspect of the mission, but a cross-disciplinary dimension of it. “Care of the environment affects the quality of our relationships with God, with other human beings, and with creation itself” (GC 35, D. 3, No. 32). Thus, the Congregation viewed the mission for faith and justice from a new perspective, incorporating the environmental concern within it.

The General Congregation identified poor communities and indigenous peoples as those most affected by environmental degradation and urged all Jesuits and people who collaborate in the mission to “promote studies and practices focusing on

the causes of poverty and the question of the environment's improvement" (D. 3, No. 35). It also urged for "research results and advocacy [to] have effective practical benefits for society and the environment" (No. 35). With this Congregation, the ecological issue became firmly rooted in the Society's apostolic commitment.

After GC 35, in 2010, the new General Adolfo Nicolás modified the name of the Secretariat for Social Justice adding "and Ecology", in order to incorporate the work on behalf of the environment into the Secretariats, thus situating ecology alongside the promotion of justice. In 2010, the Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology, together with the Secretariat of Higher Education, convened a group of Jesuit and lay experts to prepare a new text on ecology which was published in 2011: *Healing a Broken World*.²⁴

The starting point for this text was a contextual analysis which demonstrated the severe environmental degradation that the planet was experiencing. It did so by detailing the different urgent situations that were being faced in each region of the Earth. After this exercise of contemplating reality, the longest chapter was devoted to clarifying how to adapt the Society's mission to this problem. The text pointed to the fact that the Society already had a long tradition of concern for the environment: the apostolic response was positioned in relation to Ignatian spirituality, the foundation offered by Ignatian spirituality in this commitment was detailed, and the need to collaborate with civil society and other religious creeds was expressed. A final chapter of recommendations indicated what changes needed to be made in the personal lives of Jesuits, and in their communities and institutions in order to offer a coherent and holistic response to this challenge.

²⁴ Working group on ecology, "Healing a Broken World", in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 107, 2011, visited in June 2017.

The document was sent to the Society accompanied by a letter from the Fr. General,²⁵ in which he urged the reading of the document in order to start out on a necessary path of conversion. He insisted on the need for a change of hearts to account for God the Creator who inhabits everything and works for us “in every reality and in all of history”. This encouraged Jesuits to make an ecological commitment rooted in Ignatian spirituality.

The document gave the stamp of approval to the commitment to ecological matters in the Society, and supported Jesuits who had greater awareness of the environmental issue to share this interest in their provinces. Some of them took this theme to the provincial congregations, others translated the text and published it, and others formed commissions to support Jesuits to work on environmental issues.

Finally, GC 36 confirmed the summons to reconcile ourselves with creation (D. 3, Nos. 29-30). Again, it situated this in relation to poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation. It echoed the recent Encyclical *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis, accusing the current economic system of discarding both natural resources and human beings. It called for a change in individual and community life-styles; an analysis of reality so as to discover the roots of problems and explore solutions; the responsible management of economic investments; and the celebration of creation, giving thanks for the vast gifts it has given.

As can be seen in this section, the Society has become increasingly aware of environmental degradation and the need to incorporate this concern into the mission. This imperative is now fully accepted at the level of discourse and further confirmations are not needed, although new initiatives possibly are.

²⁵ Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, “On Ecology”, in *Acta Romana* vol. XXV (2011–2016), fascicle I, pp. 1331–132.

12.6 Ecological Action in the Society

Not only has the Society taken a position faced with the ecological challenge, but it has responded to this challenge locally, nationally and internationally, in a variety of ways. In 2012, the Social Coordinators of the Conferences met in Rome and shared what the Society was doing in the field of ecology. This information was compiled in a document entitled *With Passion for Environmental Justice*.²⁶ Subsequently, in 2015 the *Yearbook of the Society of Jesus* dedicated a good number of articles to gathering a variety of experiences in the Society in the ecological field.²⁷ Today, these are two important resources for those who want to know about ecological action in the Society.

First, it should be said that the Jesuits' ecological awareness is changing, albeit slowly. There is greater awareness and urgency for action, but in general the issue still isn't a primary focus and is very reliant on individual initiatives. Awareness varies depending on age; in general, younger generations tend to have greater awareness, although older people are more frugal in their use of resources. It also varies from country to country, reflecting once again how perceptions in society correlate with the perceptions of Jesuits who inhabit them. But "a radical change of attitude and an organized approach to environmental action has not yet emerged."²⁸ The issue has met passive resistance and has not yet been widely incorporated into the Jesuit culture.

Second, the communities have been making efforts to respond to this new challenge, such as, for example, encouraging energy

²⁶ Social Coordinators of the Conferences, "With Passion for Environmental Justice. Response of the Society of Jesus to 'reconciliation with creation'", in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 110, 2013, pp. 40–50, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

²⁷ This *Yearbook* can be found in <https://jesuits.global/en/documents/send/3-yearbook-en/48-annuario2015-en>, visited in June 2019.

²⁸ Social Coordinators of the Conferences, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

efficiency and recycling, the use of public transport, going without meat or fish for certain days of the week, saving water and rainwater harvesting, the use of solar energy and tree planting. They have also introduced community prayers about creation and participated in retreats on this theme. Attempts are being made to be more consciously grateful of creation as a gift from God: an action of thanksgiving that ought to foster an appreciation of nature and the desire to protect it. In any case, efforts vary significantly from community to community. In big houses, the burden of these changes falls on secretaries and superiors, who can either encourage or slow down initiatives. Introducing these issues in formation houses proves a challenge, where there is a high level of awareness as well as Jesuits who will be able to make decisions in this regard in the future.

Third, institutions are slowly introducing the care for creation into their apostolic plans. The educational environment is very receptive to these themes and it provides the opportunity to incorporate new contents into pastoral practice. Some universities are taking the challenge particularly seriously and have set up programs for energy efficiency, waste management, environmental research, the reduction of electricity consumption and efficient water usage. Others have adopted a building policy that leads to less polluting and more energy efficient buildings: building orientation, geothermal energy, insulation for temperature regulation, intelligent light management, etc.

Primary and secondary schools carry out many initiatives in awareness raising, waste management, tree planting and energy efficiency, which are all well received by students. In India, *Tarumitra*—friends of the trees—stands out as a project that has energised many areas of work on ecology for students. They learn to plant native trees, reduce the use of electricity, consume natural products and love and protect creation.²⁹

²⁹ Robert Athickal and Rappai Poothokaren, “Friends of Trees”, in *Yearbook of the Society of Jesus 2015*, pp. 38–41.

Fourth, social centres operating in rural areas promote organic farming, help preserve traditional plants, and encourage the use of natural fertilisers and the planting of native trees. Some in Africa bear mentioning: the *Centre d'Etudes et de Formation Agro-Pastoral* (CEFAP) [Centre for Agro-Pastoral Research and Training] and the *Institut Supérieur Agro-Vétérinaire* (ISAV) [Higher Agro-Veterinary Institute] in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the Arrupe Social Center in Madagascar; the Jesuit Centre for Environment and Development (JCED) in Lilongwe, Malawi; and the Kasisi Agricultural Training Center (KATC) in Zambia. In the Philippines, the Environmental Science for Social Change Centre (ESSC) and the Manila Observatory are research oriented. In Latin America, centres such as ACLO in Bolivia, CIPCA and CCAIJO in Peru, *Suyusama* and IMCA in Colombia, and *Capeltic* in Mexico promote rural development and organic crop management. In India, in addition to many centres that accompany rural communities by supporting development and organic farming, the Indian Social Institutes—ISI in Delhi and Bangalore—have conducted research on the environment and the impact of its degradation on agricultural and indigenous communities. They have also studied how large development projects and natural resource extraction are hurting local communities.

In Latin America a network called *Comparte*³⁰ has been founded. It brings together organisations that seek alternative models of development through organic farming practices which allow communities to support themselves by selling their crops to national or international markets.

Fifth, there is an increasing search to find ecological undertones in Ignatian spirituality. Spiritual Exercises are being conducted that incorporate this perspective to an ever-greater extent, so as to foster a growing ecological awareness and a life-style

³⁰ One of the Society's international development NGOs, Alboan, based in the Basque Country, also participates in this network.

change in tune with these issues. These are individual cases, initiatives promoted by certain spiritual directors and also by some retreat houses whose teams are receptive to this challenge. The Guelph Retreat Centre in Canada stands out in this regard. There have also been publications aimed at identifying ecological references in the text of St. Ignatius' Exercises.³¹

Sixth, certain decisions have been reached at the Conference or provincial level. Some provinces have decided to stop investing in companies that extract fossil fuels. This is the case in the provinces of Canada, Italy and Australia at least. There is a project called *Flights for Forests* in the Asia Pacific Conference, which consists in allocating a few euros for each air passage to the planting of native forest, in this case in Cambodia, in order to offset the greenhouse gas emissions. This project is spreading to other regions.

The Latin American Conference has launched a network called *Proyecto Panamazónico*, which intends to link up the Society's activities in the Amazon, which are scattered in various countries: Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, involving a broad variety of institutions. This network works on the rights of the inhabitants of the Amazon—indigenous and *ribereños*³²—and the protection of nature. The Project has established a community in Leticia, Colombia, on the border with Peru and Brazil. It is being linked in with an ecclesial network that also tackles human and environmental problems in the Amazon called *Repam—Red Panamazónica* [Pan-Amazonian Network].

For its part, the Asia Pacific Conference has launched a network on “reconciliation with creation”, which aims to promote a change of heart among Jesuits, as Fr. Nicolás requested. Their starting point is gratitude for creation which opens the way

³¹ There is the case study “A Spirituality that Reconciles Us with Creation”, in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 111, 2013, visited in June 2019.

³² TN: *ribereños*—literally “river-people”: an ethnically diverse people in the Amazon who typically live on riverbanks and floodplains.

to changes in communities and institutions which protect the environment.

Seventh, in the international sphere some international ecological networks have emerged. There is an Ignatian advocacy network dedicated to ecology that has carried out a number of initiatives. It is the driving force behind a website called Ecojesuit,³³ which compiles brief articles, all original, about the Society's activities on behalf of the environment at the international level. Jesuits within the network have also participated in various international summits, such as the Summit on Climate Change in Copenhagen in 2009, the Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20 in 2012, the Summit on Climate Change (COP 21) in Paris in 2015, COP 23 in Bonn in 2017 and others. Meetings have been organised with scientists to bring science and religious values together for the protection of nature. The network has also convened congresses in the Conferences to address water issues.

Another network in the environmental field, called *Justice in Mining*³⁴ focuses on mining activities. Their journey began when they noticed that many rural and indigenous communities accompanied by the Society were being affected by mining activities. These communities are on different continents and this is an international issue, because mining activities driven by foreign companies can happen in any country. In this case, if you want to have an impact on mining activities, it is necessary to tackle the problem with an international outlook. This is what the network has done in the case of a Canadian mining company operating in Honduras. The network carried out activities that connected up Central American communities, research in North American universities and advocacy in Canada. A campaign on conflict-free

³³ In <http://www.ecojesuit.com>, visited in June 2017.

³⁴ *Justice in Mining* has a web page, <https://justiceinmining.com>, visited in June 2017.

technology was also launched,³⁵ because some of the most common components in electronic products come from mines in regions where mining activities support the purchase of weapons and guarantee continued conflict.

12.7 A Growing Commitment

Once again, evidence has given impetus to the response. The accumulation of data detailing the degradation of life on the planet and its uncertain future have led to civil society and the Church—and with it the Society—becoming ever-more involved in the defence of nature. The damage being caused is affecting many rural and indigenous communities that Jesuits have been accompanying for decades in various parts of the world. Protecting the poor today also means taking care of their environment, so that the natural resources on which their way of life is based continue to exist in the future. Protecting the poor and caring for creation are currently two sides of the same mission for justice, which can no longer be understood exclusively as social justice, but as socio-environmental justice.

The understanding of the ecological issue and its implications for a faith that does justice has been slow to develop. On the one hand, the awakening of ecological awareness in civil society has been very rewarding and the Society has followed in its footsteps. Scientific elites were the first to understand the facts and their consequences. Subsequently, they published their discoveries and shared their fears. Public opinion has gradually come to understand the gravity of the problem and to realise its own responsibility. At a similar pace, Jesuits have understood

³⁵ A driving force behind the campaign is Alboan, an international development NGO based in the Basque Country. To find out more about the campaign see <https://www.tecnologialibredeconflicto.org/en/>, visited in June 2019.

the magnitude of environmental degradation and the need for change. Some have shared the urgent need to respond; others on the contrary have remained sceptic. Convinced people have once again been the driving force behind change. In any case, ecological awareness among Jesuits has varied greatly from country to country, in tandem with the levels of awareness in those places.

However, in places where ecological problems and social problems are found together, the latter has been prioritised. In general, in rural and indigenous communities which are accompanied by Jesuits, the struggles for rights, education, leadership mentoring, training, and other activities have been much more at the forefront than the protection of the environment. Environmental protection has been understood as an issue within the broader protection of marginalised groups. Ecological matters have only been gaining more credence in places where rural development is a key concern and in communities affected by mining activities. On the contrary, the educational sphere has been a fertile space in which to spread the concern for the environment and take steps towards its protection.

The Society's government has made an effort to promote this commitment, especially through the Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology and the Higher Education Secretariat. Publications³⁶ have helped to steadily build awareness among Jesuits about these problems, but their contribution has not been sufficient, as their reach has been limited.

Ecclesial declarations have reached a crescendo in recent years, culminating with the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which is an essential point of reference today for the ecclesial community. The Society has taken its lead from these ecclesial declarations because, as has been mentioned, the Society's own documents

³⁶ Mainly *We live in a Broken World* (1999) and *Healing a Broken World* (2011), already cited.

have not been sufficient. The Church's conviction and the Pope's summons were the jolts required to awaken ecological awareness among Jesuits and for them to see the need to take action.

There is still some way to go. A conversion is required which not only involves action, but also a new way of perceiving the world and the Society's mission in it. In this field, ecological literacy can do a great deal of good. Today, ecology must be a cross-disciplinary dimension of the mission, imbued in life-styles and in all actions undertaken. The environment needs to be incorporated constantly and systematically, as is the case with economic or legal concerns, and not as an afterthought that might seem a hindrance to other, more important matters. The challenge in this area is therefore a spiritual one. It requires a change of heart that involves looking at reality and the role that the Society can play in the ecological sphere.

Another difficulty is that this commitment has consequences for Jesuit communities. New life-styles have to be adopted, involving changes which require significant efforts to be made in order to reach agreement and implement them. There is no doubt that when community is conceived as a mission, this path is an easier one to tread. A long road still lies ahead. In any case, the Jesuits' ability to adapt their community styles cannot be underestimated, so long as they are properly introduced and lead to healthier and more environmentally friendly practices.

Also missing is a coordinated strategy that involves the provincial level and builds links at an international level. However, promising steps are being taken towards these objectives, which will undoubtedly bear fruit in the coming years.

Finally, it gives hope to see the amount of personal, creative and exciting initiatives by specific institutions and individuals. Many of these are very recent. With the passage of time, these endeavours will be fine-tuned and increase their impact.

A Universal Horizon: Networking

In recent decades the world has become much more interconnected. As the French bishops said everything twenty years ago, we have come to live in a single globalised reality, in which we can perceive the “presence of the entire world in our lives.”¹ This global process of interrelation of lives and institutions has steadily progressed and seems to indicate that it will accelerate in the future.

The same problems are found around the planet—such as migration, environmental crises, fundamentalism, etc.—and they are an indication of the challenges humanity will have to face in this century. For its part, the Society of Jesus has had a universal vocation since its foundation, because St. Ignatius and his first companions conceived it thus. They looked at the globe as a whole and very soon Jesuits were sent to all corners of the known world at the time. They wanted to respond to a universal mission, which led them to increase their local activities, achieving universality by being present in many locations. From then on, they understood a large part of their work to be about expanding their responses, making them bigger and better, which brought them to different continents.

In an interconnected world, it is not so essential to be in many places—an otherwise impossible task in the context of a decreasing

¹ Commission Justice et Paix France, “Maîtriser la Mondialisation”, in *La Documentation Catholique* 81, 1999, 330.

number of Jesuits—but to act in areas that have knock-on effects and can have global influence. To achieve this, it is necessary to have a local presence, but equally to connect them up, so as to achieve an overall vision, develop analyses and participate in national or international decision-making spaces. This is the task of networking. Civil society is linked up today through networks that bring new capabilities and levels of action into play. The Society is also trying to build its international presence coordinated through networks. In the social field, these networks are making it possible to develop broader analyses, consolidate messaging and carry out advocacy with international components.

First, this chapter briefly describes the current globalised world, identifying some of its characteristics. Next, it describes how the Society is networking, indicating the documents that it has published on this subject and mentioning the most notable active networks. It also reflects on the faith and justice mission process, which allows international and intersectoral networks to work in a holistic way. The different components of social work fit into this framework: accompaniment, service, reflection, awareness raising and advocacy. In recent years, this has contributed to a deeper understanding of the type of work that networks can do. A brief section is included, detailing the role played by the Secretariat for Social Justice² in Rome in the development of social apostolate networks. The chapter ends with a section that contains some concluding reflections.

13.1 The World Became Smaller

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent disappearance of the Soviet Union in 1991, the separation of the world

² As already mentioned, it was named thus until 2010, when Fr. Nicolás changed it to “Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology”, while preserving continuity with the work carried out to date.

into two antagonistic blocs—capitalist and communist—that had dominated the international scene since the end of the Second World War vanished. All that remained was a single set of countries in which the same market rules prevailed. At that moment, Francis Fukuyama published a book, *The End of History*,³ which soon became popular because it captured the zeitgeist of the era. According to the theory it expounded, ideologies were a thing of the past and all that remained was a single capitalist economic model that would go on to govern history.

By then China had been incorporated into the global market and in the following decades it would go on to become the factory of the entire world, flooding countries with products and consuming raw materials from all corners of the globe at an incredible rate. It became the destination of choice for international investment and turned itself into the workshop of the world.

In the 1980s, the United States and Great Britain consolidated the rules of the new international economic order, which obeyed what became known as the “Washington Consensus”: liberalising trade, opening economies up to foreign direct investment, privatising public companies, abolishing regulations that obstruct market access and restrict competition, reducing taxes for the largest contributors, etc.

Countries increasingly became interconnected and intertwined through trade. International institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization became the drivers of the international economic agenda, characterised by a progressive disappearance of trade barriers, the exchange of goods and services and market unification. During those years, when many countries in the Global South were drowning in debt, the IMF made large loans in return for market liberalisation and the incorporation of the new international agenda. And so, one after another, countries had to accept it.

³ Fukuyama, *op. cit.*

In particular, the financial products market was globalised by eliminating tariffs on the movement of capital. In this way international investment was made easier. Many countries benefited from this and since then have been able to finance their production processes in this way. That being said, governments were left exposed to the power of the large transnational corporations and were left in weaker negotiating positions.

Simultaneously, international transport increased, both by sea and air, allowing the movement of raw materials and manufactured products throughout the world. Never before had it been so easy for goods from distant lands to reach the most far-flung areas of the earth. The world became a sole, colossal and ever-more unified market.

In turn, with the increasing ease of air travel, the movement of people exploded. Both tourism and economic migration have steadily increased since then. However, the movement of people has been restricted through visas and closed borders: a fact which reared its ugly head with the waves of refugees to Europe from Syria, and the migrant caravans from Central America to the United States. In both cases, ways have been sought to stop people arriving to their destination countries. Today, borders are more inhospitable for human beings, especially for those who are forced to emigrate because of violence. They have become frontiers of death.

In addition, in recent decades, information and communication technologies have been developed at astonishing speeds, allowing the world to be connected through a dense network of relationships which allow news to be spread instantly to the furthest corners of the planet. Events trigger immediate consequences which affect all nations, meaning that most important events have global repercussions. This set of decisions, events and technologies has permanently made the world today much smaller; in reality, it is small for the 'included', and full of borders and dangers for the 'excluded'.

13.1.1 Global Issues

It is not surprising then that the issues of concern to citizens are basically the same at a global level: migration and its consequences on sending and receiving societies, climate change and how it is being tackled internationally, growing inequality in our societies, education and access to the labour market, international terrorism, the spread of a secular culture that marginalises religious discourse, populism, corruption, etc.

These are phenomena that cannot be contained by borders, but which affect each country in a different way. This means that concerns in different nations are similar, although interests may diverge. For example, global warming worries everyone, but it is not experienced in the same way south of the Sahel, where the fear is of increasing desertification, as in Canada, which looks northwards to occupy new territories and make use of less inhospitable environments to exploit massive natural resources. Something similar occurs with migration. In migration destination countries, policies are designed to regulate the arrival of people and work is done to integrate. On the other hand, sending countries think about how to retain the most gifted people and how to accompany families where the youngest children have been left with their grandparents after their parents' departure, in an emotional cleavage that leads to new social problems. The same issues, therefore, but with dilemmas that vary considerably from country to country.

13.1.2 Great International Forces

In this globalised world, governments have been losing power, while other actors have gained unknown decision-making leverage. These are large transnational corporations, many of whom have budgets which far exceed the Gross Domestic Product of many countries, thereby giving them disproportionate bargaining

power. These multinationals are joined by financial groups, foreign governments and major international organisations. National barriers, which served as bulwarks against external political and economic powers, have weakened, leaving countries much more exposed to new actors, while governments see their leadership capacity restricted and diminished. Today there are many agents who can veto, counteract and combat the state's room for manoeuvre.⁴

While international forces have always had an important influence on the evolution of countries, today this has increased, so that nations now act in a context determined largely on the international scene, leaving them at its mercy. This was the case in the 2008 economic crisis which began in the United States and spread like a wildfire across the international stage, reaching all economies and hitting those most integrated in the global market the hardest. It's also the case that we now follow elections in other countries more closely than ever before, because we know that the policies adopted by their governments will affect us directly. However, we have no way of influencing these election processes, no matter how much they affect us. Today everything is deeply interconnected.

13.1.3 International Decision-Making Spaces

New international decision-making spaces have also emerged. To give some examples, the United Nations and the international organisations that grew out of the Bretton Woods Agreements (1944), which as they developed have given us, among others, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

In turn, there has been growing regional organisation around communities of countries, the most established being the European Union, but there is also the African Union, the Organization

⁴ This is the thesis of Moisés Naim, *The End of Power*, Basic Books, 2014.

of American States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and others. All of them have their own decision-making spaces, be they economic or political. They have to be consulted in certain cases. There is also the International Court of Justice. International trade agreements include the possibility of resolving disputes in non-national courts. There is therefore an important network of supranational institutions where questions that are beyond national jurisdictions are settled.

Thus, we are faced with a new world in which the issues that affect people are transnational, and the agencies and actors that decide how they are dealt with comprise an institutional network with interwoven national and international threads. Therefore, nations lose control of governance of this globalised world.

13.2 The Society's Networking

Long ago the Society became aware of this reality which demands new responses. In today's globalised world, apostolic challenges are international and global. In addition, such is their complexity, it is a challenge to traditional organising through apostolic sectors: broadly pastoral, social, educational, intellectual. Having sectors assumes that apostolic challenges can be divided, something which no longer holds true. It is necessary to coordinate efforts across all these areas, in order to link up and offer a comprehensive response.

However, since its inception, the Society has operated in a distinctly local manner. It offered its services in many nations, but it has done so by establishing roots in certain places. It is an international Society, but one deeply rooted in local cultures and communities.

The new reality and the desire to respond to the call of justice by transforming reality forces us to adopt other ways of working. On the one hand, this involves a departure from remaining solely

in a local area, to operate in a way that allows national borders to be overcome. On the other hand, it is also necessary to break down the rigid frameworks that keep the apostolic sectors of the Society divided. Responses today need to bring together the efforts of education, pastoral work, research, social action, etc. One possible conclusion is that internationalisation and intersectoral collaboration are the signs of a new way of serving justice today in an organisation like the Society. Given that today many of the Society's provinces span across entire countries, one can speak of the need for intersectoral and interprovincial work.

Intersectoral and interprovincial collaboration can be addressed through networks in which institutions from different apostolic sectors collaborate and which are located in different provinces or countries. In fact, this has been going on for years.

There are many types of networks, but as a starting point one could say that there are two categories of networks which are markedly different in their conception. On the one hand, there are *sectoral networks* that bring together apostolic works operating in the same activity area. These are school, university, or parish networks. It is common and logical for them to come together to study problems they collectively face. In addition, presenting themselves as a single international body spread across all the continents gives appeal to their service. Where necessary, they can propose international programs that are much in demand today. In the specific case of universities or colleges, these networks have great potential to increase the value of each institution individually. On the other hand, there are networks that we could term *mission networks*. Mission networks respond to concrete apostolic challenges from different angles. A mission network might be, for example, a migration network, in which universities, schools, social centres and parishes design a joint strategy to address this problem. This type of network can either keep within the confines of one province or they can be interprovincial; in any case, they bring together the efforts of various apostolic sectors.

13.2.1 *The Society's Documents on Networking*

Reflections on networking appear purposefully in the Society's official documents,⁵ in General Congregation 34, which dedicated Decree 21 to "Interprovincial and Supraprovincial Cooperation". The Decree states, among other things, that "Although numerous regional and international networks already exist, to exploit more fully the possibilities given us by being an international body, additional global and regional networks must be created. Such networks of persons and institutions should be capable of addressing global concerns through support, sharing of information, planning, and evaluation, or through implementation of projects that cannot easily be carried out within province structures... Initiative and support for these various forms of networks should come from all levels of the Society, but the secretariats of the General Curia must continue to play an important role in establishing them."⁶ Therefore, the need and motivation for these networks was already specified, and the course they had to follow was already set.

In 2002, the Secretariat for Social Justice published a document entitled "Guidelines on Jesuit Networking in the Social Area".⁷ It was structured around a series of questions that sought to clarify what a network consisted of, what it meant to be a "Jesuit" network, what their characteristics were, and how they should be governed. It also listed some networks active at the time. Its main concern was related to how the Society's government could

⁵ Previously, since Arrupe's time in charge, there was a growing awareness of the need for international collaboration, as part of a process of building a truly universal body. See his speech to GC 31, on October 14th, 1966, about "Colaboración internacional" [International Collaboration], which is a firm summons to collective international work in the Society. This is also briefly alluded to in GC 32, in the final number (No. 81) of Decree 4.

⁶ GC 34, D. 21, No. 14.

⁷ It can be found in <http://www.sjweb.info/documents/sjs/docs/ENG%20GUIDELINES.pdf>, visited in June 2019.

support and guide networks. This demonstrates, therefore, that most of the problems that networks face had already been identified at that stage.

The operational networks in the social sector that appeared in the document were, among others, AJAN, a network of African Jesuits against AIDS, which was already active in several countries; EUROJESS, which brought together European Jesuits specialised in the social sciences for a bi-annual meeting; IJND, the international Jesuit network for development, which brought together several social centres from all the Conferences⁸ to begin to work together on issues such as development, debt, trade and good governance; IPC, a network on population issues; the indigenous network, already active in Latin America at that time, which hosted a broad bi-annual meeting of Jesuits and members of indigenous communities; MOSJ, Jesuits in the Workers' Mission in Europe. Only some of them are still active today, which is a reflection of the fragility that networks have demonstrated.

During General Congregation 35 (2008), the need to promote the networks was stressed and a recommendation on them was included in the government decree: "We encourage the Society's government at all levels to explore means by which more effective networking might take place among all apostolic works associated with the Society of Jesus."⁹

In 2012, a Congress on networking in the Society was organised at the Boston College (United States). Both the articles from the main speakers and the final conclusion document are of great interest and demonstrate the depth of reflection that had been

⁸ Conferences are large geographic areas that include a sufficient number of provinces, to allow their collaboration. They are led by a President who convenes and works with the conference provincials. There are currently six conferences: Africa, Latin America, Asia Pacific, United States and Canada, Europe, and South Asia.

⁹ GC 36, D. 6, No. 29a.

reached at that time.¹⁰ One of the ideas that was particularly emphasised was that a Jesuit network is a way to respond globally to the Society's mission, connecting institutions so that they may act as a single unit in order to achieve universal apostolic impact.¹¹

It was also indicated that although the Society is remarkably equipped to act on a global scale, and despite the fact that there are high expectations for the role it plays, it encounters many obstacles across various areas: operational difficulties, leadership and the absence of a culture of collaboration and governance. These drawbacks, in one way or another, are still present today.

The final document from this Congress made a series of recommendations, such as developing an awareness of a common and universal mission, through the establishment of apostolic priorities and support structures, such as the Secretariats. It also felt it was necessary to encourage international leadership, favour the use of new information and communication technologies and continue to deepen reflection on Jesuit networking.¹²

For their part, in 2013 the Social Coordinators of the Conferences published a document in which they detailed their experience of networks and reflections on the topic.¹³ The document traced the history of the development of networks, gave reasons

¹⁰ The documents can be found in <https://app.box.com/v/jesuitnetworking>, visited in June 2017. The final document can be consulted in http://historial.pastoralsj.org/jesuitnetworking/docs/2012_Conferencia_Networking_Internacional_Jesuita.pdf, visited in June 2017.

¹¹ Luis Arancibia, *International Networking in the Society of Jesus. An analysis of the current state*, 2012, p. 17, in Congress in Boston College, <https://app.box.com/v/jesuitnetworking/1/285236923/2259778305/1>, visited in June 2017.

¹² Jornadas en Boston College, documento final, *Trabajo en red Internacional en la Compañía de Jesús. Retos desde la Misión Universal*, April 28th–30th, 2012, pp. 15–18.

¹³ Social Coordinators of the Conferences, "Networking in order to respond better to our mission. Networks of the social apostolate in the Society of Jesus" in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 113, 2013, pp. 62-71, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

why today they are necessary in an essentially interconnected world, detailed the specific Jesuit and Ignatian characteristics that should characterise this work, pointed out the advantages offered by networks, distinguished the types of networks that may exist, indicated key factors of success and identified obstacles, and concluded with some brief recommendations and proposals.

Finally, General Congregation 36, in Decree 1, included a paragraph on networking, which in a sense is a synthesis of the journey to this day: “Because of the magnitude and interconnect- edness of the challenges we face, it is important to support and encourage the growing collaboration among Jesuits and Jesuit apostolates through networks. International and intersectoral net- works are an opportunity to strengthen our identity, as we share our capacities and local engagements in order together to serve a universal mission.”¹⁴

So, as has been demonstrated, a significant number of docu- ments have been produced which reflect on networks within the Society: their objectives, modes of development and forms of governance. Despite this, our experience is still limited.

13.2.2 Some Significant Networks

Some networks that are currently active bear mentioning due to their importance. The first category contains international insti- tutions that, although they are under the same leadership, have some of the characteristics of a network. We could term these institution-networks. Primarily, the Jesuit Refugee Service is in this set, with its ten regions covering about fifty countries. Its international office in Rome directs, supervises and offers addi- tional services to the wider institution. There is some autonomy at the local and regional level, but JRS responds as a whole to events in any of the places where it is present. We are therefore talking

¹⁴ GC 36, D. 1, No. 35.

about an institution which, due to its broad reach and need for a certain level local autonomy, has characteristics that are typical of a network.

In the second category, networks in a specific apostolic sector must be included, which are made up of nodes of works from a single apostolic area. However, they rely on a central node that accompanies, guides, inspires and facilitates additional services: things that the individual nodes of the network could not develop in isolation, such as communication, advocacy, inter-institutional contact, and others. These are networks of apostolic activities, in the sense that they are not intersectoral, but encompass a single apostolic area. The main network in this category is *Fe y Alegría*. As has been seen,¹⁵ *Fe y Alegría* expanded from its province of birth, Venezuela, to other Latin American countries, making use of the Society's own structures. In each country, *Fe y Alegría* founded its own legal entity, which allowed it to operate under a single education law in each jurisdiction. Each national *Fe y Alegría* institution is therefore independent and provides services to the *Fe y Alegría* schools in the country. In turn, all of these national *Fe y Alegría* are linked through the International Federation of *Fe y Alegría*. The Federation truly is a network of national networks. Each member is independent, but by participating in the Federation they gain additional energy and the ability to carry out projects that would be impossible to undertake alone.

The Federation adds value, achieving what is called a “new level of agency”; that is, its existence allows the launching of projects which individual members can't take on by themselves, or not to the same standard. This goes for public advocacy, implementing management systems and institutional development, improving education standards, designing programs to educate in values, etc. These programs—this is the name given to them—are agreed upon and approved at the annual International Congress

¹⁵ In Chapter 9: Where the Asphalt Ends: Education at the Margins.

and Assembly and in this way respond to the needs expressed by national institutions. One national member of the network is selected to take leadership over each program. In this manner, local initiative is fused with the strength of international organising, thereby preserving the local aspect which is the inspiration for many of the programs. The network gives enormous added value. Autonomy, shared responsibility and joint effort are some of the attitudes that the network fosters.

The *Fe y Alegría* network has the advantage of being perfectly integrated with the Society's hierarchical structure. National directors are appointed by their respective provincials, who are responsible for the national organisation. The international director is appointed by the Provincial Conference, once an agreement has been reached. The director reports to the Conference, which is responsible for anything that may occur in the Federation. *Fe y Alegría* is one of the best examples in the Society of an effective network that is well-coordinated with the hierarchical structure of the provinces.

In a third category, the Xavier Network bears mentioning, which at present brings together the mission offices and secretariats, as well as the Society's international development agencies. It basically includes European organisations, along with the Jesuit development NGOs in English Canada and Australia. All of these are institutions that support the Society's social works in the Global South, especially through financial support, but also with services. They are essential sources of funding for many of the social centres. Again, this is a sectoral network, because it brings together institutions that are basically engaged in the same activities, although each organisation has its own particularities. The Xavier Network has an intensely horizontal structure, as it responds to members' initiatives and remains considerably independent from the Society's hierarchical structure. It has managed to provide considerable added value across several areas. The network facilitates the monitoring of supports provided by

the organisations, which means duplication can be eliminated. At present, the organisations collaborate in international volunteering programs, share good practices and reach agreements that enhance these activities. A coordination mechanism in the event of natural disasters has also been successfully developed, which gives the organisations a single point of contact with affected institutions and provinces, channelling funds collected by the entire network and making it easier to receive information and report the accounts, key elements with respect to the donors of each of the institutions in the network. Since its founding in 2003, the Xavier Network has managed to achieve a considerably effective and significant impact.

A fourth category includes networks that respond to certain apostolic challenges—always social in essence—addressing them from a variety of apostolic perspectives: pastoral, social, intellectual, educational... Among them is the Jesuit Migrant Service of Latin America (SJM), which responds to the migration issue in Latin America and the Caribbean through three strands of action.

The first strand involves the socio-pastoral dimension combined with direct humanitarian and social services, which includes accompaniment, both evangelising and pastoral, of the most vulnerable migrants. In this dimension, parishes and social centres are central. The second strand focuses on the research and academic dimension, which promotes teaching on the phenomenon of migration in different academic disciplines and research on the causes and consequences of the current migratory phenomenon. The associated research areas are socioeconomics, demographics, public health, violence, law, culture and religion. Universities and educational institutes are the driving force in this strand. A third strand addresses the political and organisational dimension, which promotes work for social change through awareness-raising and mobilisation campaigns in favour of the most vulnerable migrants and their families. It also galvanises political activism, focusing it on the main centres of power to achieve substantive changes to

migration, labour and socioeconomic situations. Moreover, this strand promotes legal counselling and advocacy on human rights issues on behalf of the most vulnerable migrants and their families and the institutions that serve them. The works in the social sector mainly participate in this strand.

Overall, this network brings together nearly one hundred institutions throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Because of the vast number, they are organised around several geographical regions. The institutions span across the entire spectrum of the Society's apostolic activities, so the network is essentially intersectoral.

As in the case of *Fe y Alegría*, the Conference has been keen to build close links between SJM and the Society's hierarchical structure. The network has an international director appointed by mutual agreement by the provincials and national directors who coordinate the activities in the different countries. These are appointed by their respective provincials. Another achievement has been that the apostolic sectors themselves are taking responsibility for the network.

We can also mention AJAN—African Jesuits AIDS Network—a network dedicated to supporting AIDS patients in Africa, through health services and prevention campaigns. The network is active in ten countries and its headquarters are in Nairobi. From its headquarters, training workshops are organised and communication services are offered which showcase the variety of its activities. Its director visits and accompanies the local projects and facilitates the development of new services. AJAN can be considered an intersectoral network because it involves mainly social centres, parishes and medical clinics.

The Global Ignatian Advocacy Networks (GIAN) must also be included in this fourth category, founded in the aftermath of General Congregation 35 (2008) which gave a boost to networks.¹⁶

¹⁶ To better understand what these networks are and what they do, refer to *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 110, 2013, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>. Prior to its formation, a reflection

Four networks were formed, each responding to a specific apostolic summons: the right to a high standard of education, migration, ecology and justice in mining. In this case, these are international networks that span across several Conferences and they are inter-sectoral. In a way, these networks demonstrate the full spectrum of complexity that can be found in an apostolic network.

The topic areas for the networks were chosen on the one hand because of their importance, but on the other, because the Society has international institutional resources to add value in these fields. These networks are led by a person who coordinates and convenes a group which acts as the networks' driving force. This group is composed of people who serve as communication channels with the Conferences, because each Conference has its own representative who, in most cases, is nominated by the President of the Conference.

Each of the four networks is different. They all share updates about what is happening in their topic areas, in such a way that each network gains a global vision of what the Society is doing in their areas. Some have initiated awareness-raising campaigns, such as the Migration Network which launched the Hospitality Campaign under the initiative of the Jesuit Migrant Service of Latin America, later spreading to other Conferences. Other networks participate in international civil society campaigns, like the Right to Education Network does the Global Campaign for Education. Some participate in international summits, such as the Ecology Network which has attended the most important United Nations events in recent years on climate and water. For its part, the Justice in Mining Network has been able to take part in the legal debates in Europe on the traceability of minerals, in order to prevent them from being sourced from countries where the profits

was made on the meaning of the Ignatian advocacy, which can be found in http://www.sjweb.info/sjs/documents/ian_eng.pdf, visited in June 2019.

from their sale are used to finance armed conflicts. This has been done in collaboration with the Society's institutions in Africa. All of the networks strive to communicate their activities and initiatives, and three have launched a web page for this purpose.¹⁷

There is a discreet balance to be struck as a GIAN network. On the one hand, its greatest value is in daring to address, in a global and intersectoral manner, apostolic challenges as relevant to the Society as the ones chosen. They have also been brave in identifying political advocacy as an essential purpose of their formation. This is the first time that initiatives like this have existed in the Society, and they clearly show the pathway to the future for apostolic institutions with the desire to be universal in a globalised world. However, it has not yet been possible to sufficiently link up with the Society's hierarchical structure and this is possibly the greatest shortfall. Thus, inevitably, the required economic and human resources are scarce. Political advocacy at the international level has proven more complicated than it first appeared, although little by little the most appropriate ways to achieve the desired impact are being discovered.

Finally, it must also be said that the Society, through these endeavours, is adding its voice in favour of a faith-inspired justice to those in international civil society working for a fairer world. Collaboration in this field with other ecclesial and civil actors, networks, campaigns and international organisations is inevitable. There are many actors that are currently working in the same areas as the Society. Today, collaboration is the only way we can achieve efficiency and avoid duplication which consumes a lot of energy and resources. The Society can contribute its many local connections, the considerable reflection it has carried out, its many contacts and its perspective of faith. Maybe these are the

¹⁷ This is the case of the Ecology Network, with <http://www.ecojesuit.com>, the Right to Education Network, with <http://edujesuit.org/> and the Justice in Mining Network, with <https://justiceinmining.com>, visited in June of 2017. The Migration Network, as such, lacks its own communication tools.

characteristics that it can bring to the table in a task that is necessarily polyphonic. Today, this is the path of the greater good.

13.3 The Process of the Faith and Justice Mission

In recent decades, the social sector has learned that work for justice requires a variety of components. Thus, it is necessary to be close to the poor, to serve them and to listen to them, but one must also reflect on the complex reality that leads to marginalisation and exclusion, and it is equally essential to carry out political advocacy that strives for structural transformation. For centuries, social action could be understood basically as a charitable work. However, the evolution experienced during the twentieth century and endorsed at General Congregation 32 which expressed the mission as “the defence of faith and the promotion of justice”, has led to an understanding of the responsibility to transform reality as a whole; that is, to participate with a universal outlook in processes and the definition of structures that are shaping reality.

Hence, it is now understood that the promotion of justice involves a process that can be expressed with the following diagram:

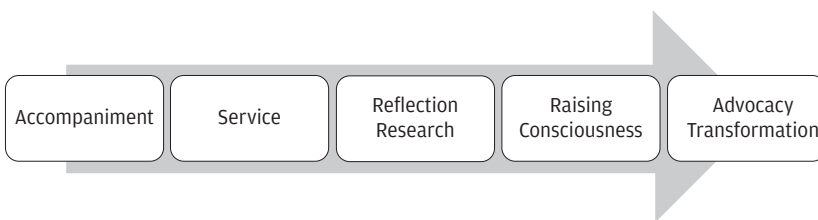


Figure 1. Process of Faith and Justice

This is a process that involves the five components that appear in the diagram.¹⁸ The Society’s presence begins with encounter,

¹⁸ An explanation of this process can be found in Social Coordinators of the Conferences, “Renewing our commitment to a faith that does justice”,

with engaging with people in need, which establishes an enriching human relationship between both parties. This encounter is a source of spiritual and human consolation. The Society has identified this basic and horizontal human relationship as the main spiritual source in the promotion of justice. This area can be termed *accompaniment*.

The person who accompanies soon realises that the Society has resources and capacities that it can put at the service of the excluded. This is where *service* begins. Normally this is carried out through institutions that ensure stability and a lasting presence. Sometimes these institutions can grow to become very large, when needs are high and there is no scarcity of accessible resources. The risk is that with professionalisation, accompaniment falls by the wayside and the vertical nature of any service institution threatens the richness of the horizontal human encounter.

The process does not end here. The Society's organisations also reflect on reality, analyse it, try to see why people are in the situations they are in, observe the phenomena and identify the social actors involved and examine their roles. The entire area of *research and reflection* allows us to gain a new picture of reality, one more complex and more comprehensive.

Research contributes data to public discussion, disseminates knowledge and helps others acquire a more nuanced and faithful vision of the situations they experience. This is when *sensitisation* comes into play. Historically, this has been recognised as one of the Society's strong points and many Jesuits have achieved public renown for this reason. It is crucial to acknowledge that what lends credibility to analysis is not so much its brilliance, but that it is born out of contact with the reality of suffering. This is the fundamental reason why people listen, because of the power

of a comprehensively produced personal account, free of simplifications or demagoguery.

Finally, this same research also makes space for public proposals to better respond to social problems and opens the way for dialogue with public decision-makers and for political *advocacy*. This is the area of *structural transformation*.

All these steps are necessary and must be interlinked. Some require more resources than others. Service usually consumes the most and the cost is also easier to justify. The other four steps are more difficult to sustain. Analysis is also commonplace in the Society; the challenge is to connect it up with social work at the local level. Analysis is usually carried out in universities, and communication between them and social centres is a painstaking effort.

This process can only be fully addressed by a plural group of institutions working in different apostolic sectors, because it draws on the pastoral, social and educational areas; research, institutional and social contacts, public representation, and coordination. The process necessarily requires the formation of networks which can be either regional or international.

Strictly speaking, accompaniment and service do not require the formation of networks. Networks can be of benefit to gather information, exchange good practices and contacts, and even to take advantage of a common brand that gives visibility. However, if institutions ignore the following steps—research, sensitisation and advocacy—then they are giving up on the task of structural transformation. Therefore, they are giving up on the promotion of justice. Because research, sensitisation and advocacy have an impact in the context of extensive networks that coordinate objectives and resources, agree on agendas, and have a generous and open outlook. When networks carry out their mission well, they enrich local work and help reorient it towards more structural objectives. Work carried out as a group gains new meaning.

13.4 The Role of the Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology

Throughout this long journey of networking in the social apostolate, the Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology has played a very important role. As you have seen, it participated in and energised some of the reflections on networks, promoted contact and synergies, encouraged and motivated progress in this direction and kept the Society's General Government informed on this topic, so that it could support and inspire it.

In June 1997, Fr. Michael Czerny—Secretary for Social Justice from 1992 to 2002—convened a Congress in Naples on the social apostolate, with delegates from all the provinces, together with the Council of the Fr. General and the Curia delegates for formation, spirituality and communication.¹⁹ In total about 160 people participated. This gave a major boost to the mutual knowledge of the sector and the recognition of a series of themes on a global scale.

The subsequent effort made in drafting the “Characteristics of the Social Apostolate of the Society of Jesus”²⁰ fostered a growing affinity and promoted the desire to form networks, as a way of linking up the sector on an international level. The document itself called for their creation.

Fr. Fernando F. Franco—secretary from 2002 to 2010—started to convene yearly meetings of the Assistancy Social Coordinators²¹ in Rome, to discuss common issues and to explore ways of working together. This succeeded in giving new impetus to linking

¹⁹ A description of the contents of the Congress can be found in *Promotio Iustitiae* No. 68, 1997, in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

²⁰ They can be found in <https://www.sjesjesuits.global/documents-category/promotio-iustitiae/>.

²¹ Assistancies are geographic regions that bring together a number of provinces. They are administrative divisions in the Society through which the Fr. General governs.

up the sector internationally. During his time at the Secretariat, Fr. Franco encouraged the participation of social centres in the World Social Forums which took place with great energy during that period, spurred on by opposition to a globalisation that was felt to be excluding. The meetings that were held at those Forums continued to foster mutual knowledge and the desire for collaboration. In November 2008 in El Escorial, after General Congregation 35 (2008), he convened a large group of Jesuits and lay people involved in the social sector to dialogue and establish international networks. A first draft of the topic areas that would lead to the GIAN networks were identified at that meeting.

From 2011 to 2017, with the backing of Fr. Álvarez in the Secretariat, the GIAN networks made progress and developed into their current form. During those years, each Conference appointed a Jesuit as coordinator of the social sector in the Conference. These people energised relationships and collaboration within their own Conferences, which came to be an investment for the future. The Conferences are the natural space for international collaboration; they have far more means to convene meetings and have a better grasp of the situations being faced, which are so diverse from continent to continent. In addition, reflections are continuing to develop on global issues and on the networks themselves at meetings of the Conference Social Coordinators in Rome. In November 2015, an extensive meeting was held in Loyola in which the GIAN networks and the Xavier Network participated, which allowed the groups in attendance to paint a picture of the respective states of these thematic networks.

In this way, the Secretariat has enabled networks to be bolstered, forces to be brought together, and contacts and synergies to be developed. Given that its role is about inspiring and encouraging, the Secretariat has facilitated a soft-touch approach to networks' development, with initiative and creativity coming from local institutions. Therein lies its strength and its weakness.

13.5 Networks: A Necessity and a Task Ahead

Today we live in a globalised world, in which apostolic challenges are essentially global and are on an international scale. For its part, the Society has always sought to structure itself as a universal body. These two facts are contributing to the Jesuits taking steps towards coordinated international action. Historically, the Society has worked mainly locally, although it has always tried to maintain a broader perspective. The tools available in today's world mean that it is now possible to communicate and collaborate internationally in a way previously unimaginable. Hence, unprecedented possibilities are opened up for comprehensive responses that bring together the efforts of the Society's works in an international and intersectoral manner. This is a unique opportunity for networking.

The need for intersectoral collaboration is driven home by the multifaceted nature of apostolic challenges. They require pastoral, cultural, educational, social and intellectual initiatives. This is the case in the phenomena of migration, environmental degradation, education and development. One type of action is not enough; rather, joining up the variety of endeavours leads to a more effective and complete response.

This international and intersectoral collaboration can better address the complex global problems that humanity is facing. If Ignatian spirituality always pursues the greater good, then today this aspiration means looking for ways to allow local efforts to achieve some degree of collaboration and cohesiveness at an international level and in intersectoral work. This fact signals the need to develop interprovincial and intersectoral networks that, having identified some issues to respond to, generate synergies and coordinate responses that are aligned with one another. Networking is therefore unavoidable for an institution such as the Society which believes that "the more universal the good is, the more is it divine."²²

²² *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, No. 622.

Fortunately, the Society is in a good starting position for this type of networking, because the Society has similar institutions—educational, social, cultural, intellectual—in numerous countries around the world. This means it is already able to carry out this collaboration through networks, at a local level in an intersectoral manner, and also at an international level. The hope is that this work will develop significantly in the future.

On the other hand, there are difficulties. Both the provinces and the apostolic institutions are considerably autonomous and devote most of their resources, if not all of them, to developing their work at the local level. Obstacles emerge when the time comes to look outward, towards other objectives that do not necessarily contribute to the institutional or provincial goals in a strict sense. This is due to the fact that in most cases, institutions and provinces are at the limit of their working capacity. In addition, the culture of collaboration is not widespread enough and will need to be further developed. Cooperation is not one of the Jesuits' strongest characteristics, and they are usually very capable of undertaking large endeavours alone. Likewise, networking requires economic and human resources that incur additional costs, which must either be covered by external contributions or by the efforts of provinces and institutions.

In any case, perhaps the biggest obstacle is the lack of effective institutional instruments to direct and facilitate this international and intersectoral collaboration. Networking will require new means to enable this type of cooperation, along with a good measure of leadership. Work being done by the Conferences is helping considerably in this task, but it still proves insufficient faced with the autonomy of provinces and works.

Although, as has been said, networking has had its difficulties, there have been increasing attempts to create networks. There is no doubt that these initiatives will bear fruit. In the medium term it will be necessary to establish some order of priority, so that the

growing number does not lead to competition among them. By establishing some priorities, the Society and the Conferences will help in this regard. These priorities can serve as indicators of the preferred apostolic areas for the creation of networks, which will make it easier to allocate the required resources in a determined direction.

Conclusion: Ignatian Spirituality as the Bedrock

The history of the social apostolate of the Society of Jesus is suffused with creativity and perseverance, determination and dedication. Throughout this journey through history we have been able to see many works and initiatives, some which are still active to date, others which have ended due to substantial changes in reality. The history covered shows *what is seen*. However, flowing beneath the service to the poor and the promotion of justice are the wellsprings that have nourished the people who have dedicated themselves to this work. The motives are overshadowed by the accomplishments, but they are what give meaning and energy, direction and hope. It is also necessary to delve into *what is unseen*.

This unseen element, which underpins everything the Jesuits in the social apostolate have carried out, is their spirituality. This is curious, because sometimes they have been labelled as too secularised and they themselves have not always reflected explicitly on the reasons for their commitment, but their actions and initiatives have undoubtedly been inspired by Ignatian spirituality. Therefore, reading into their lives and their accomplishments allows for a better understanding of this.

It might seem like spirituality is not so crucial in the social sphere, because people exist in a profane environment in which reference to faith often remains hidden. In many cases, its traces

are not apparent in the language used or in the real-world accomplishments. But a closer look allows us to discover that serving the least in society is an expression of the desire to care for the Poor Christ, that believing in His future is to proclaim the utopia of the Kingdom yet to come, and that defending His dignity is to gather around the cause of Jesus of the Gospel. Social work is a visible word of the consequences of faith in reality. Solidarity is the preferred language to express God in the social apostolate.

In turn, those who work in the social area are continually pushed to make important decisions that affect people's lives and the values of the institution in which they work. Because reality is so changeable, this process of making serious decisions never stops. For social works to be fruitful they must constantly return to the profound sources of spirituality; to stay on the right path it's necessary to journey deeper. This is what the Jesuits involved in the social apostolate have done, plunging into the waters of Ignatian spirituality, a spirituality rooted in life and for life.

For this reason, this concluding chapter addresses the existing dialogue between the social apostolate and Ignatian spirituality. It is divided into three parts. First, the spiritual motivations of this apostolate will be discussed. Next, some conditions will be detailed which allow this apostolate to begin and develop. Finally, some Ignatian characteristics of social work will be identified, which in turn give rise to certain creative tensions.

14.1 Spiritual Sources

Here the main spiritual sources are presented that have motivated social action and that continue to do so today. First, *compassion* is the basic engine that drives charitable and social action and it manifests as a *desire to serve the poor*. Compassion is expressed in the Gospel in the passages that recall how Jesus, upon seeing the suffering of people, was moved to action, like when he saw

the crowds and felt compassion for them because they walked like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36). This is the same stirring compassion experienced by the father of the prodigal son, who saw his son in the distance and felt moved inside, running to embrace and kiss him (Luke 15:20). It is also the gesture of the Good Samaritan, who saw the assaulted man, was moved and came to his aid (Luke 10:33). In the Exercises, compassion is expressed clearly in the Contemplation of the Incarnation, when the Trinity, upon seeing the situation of the world, takes pity and decides to send the Second Person to save the world: "Let us work the redemption" (SE 107). God's feeling of compassion unfolds in the contemplation of the works of Jesus throughout the second, third and fourth weeks.

Compassion is what has moved so many Jesuits and collaborators to serve the least in society, to live among them, to reflect on their situations and to advocate for them. The dynamics of compassion underpin a large part of the social apostolate's initiatives, inspiring in a gentle and constant way, without leaving one complacent, spurring one to heart-filled action. This is not just a feeling that kindles an intimate empathy for the pain of others, but a movement that stirs one within, leading to effective action.

In the history of the social apostolate it can be seen that at every stage the compassionate desire to serve the least in society has involved discernment. On the one hand, considerations were made to identify both who the poor were and who among them were the most destitute: the workers, the victims of state violence, poor communities, children from excluded families, indigenous people, refugees... There has been a constant trend of seeking to serve where there was greatest need. On the other hand, discernment has been required in relation to the social works themselves. Serving the poor often leads to reputable institutions being established which provide diverse support. Normally these tend to grow in size, given that there is overwhelming need combined

with generous people to financially support the projects. Therefore, building up large charitable institutions is not difficult. They make notable contributions, but they must be careful to ensure that the relationship of service does not dilute into a vertical interaction where the giver remains positioned above the receiver. In this case, the poor person remains poor, even if they receive a lot.

A second driving force of social action is *indignation*. Indignation appears several times in the Gospel, for example when Jesus casts the merchants from the temple (John 2:13-25 and parallel texts), or when He indignantly addresses the Pharisees. He repeatedly criticises their hypocrisy, because they shut others out of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 23:13-14), because their justice is only a veneer (Matt 23:27-28), and because they abide by the Law while neglecting mercy (Matt 23:23-24). Similar criticism can be found in Gospels other than the book of Matthew.

Indignation is not absent in the Exercises either. In the meditation on sin, Ignatius bids the retreatant to ask to experience “shame and confusion” in light of his sins (SE 48). At this stage Ignatius proposes to the retreatant to go before the Crucified Christ and ask Him what he has done, what he does and what he must do for Christ (SE 53). In the same first week Ignatius introduces three colloquies—with Mary, the Son and the Father—to ask them to grant the retreatant a feeling of “abhorrence” for sin, internal disorder and worldly things. Both shame and confusion, as well as abhorrence, are in the same category of feelings as indignation.

Indignation leads to a critical vision of the world and gives clarity in the face of certain realities that can be harmful to people’s dignity, but whose effects can go unnoticed as they are deeply embedded in culture. Both work for human rights and advocacy are nourished by this source and it provides the necessary shrewdness to operate in uncertain terrain. It is a task that is carried out “among wolves” (Matt 10:16).

In some quarters in the Society, indignation has a very bad reputation. It is reductively branded as anger and merely by expressing indignation a person can be discredited. This interpretation has it that indignation is a sign of a person who looks at the world in black and white and has not developed purity of intention within themselves. Hence, it is enough for someone to show it to be ignored. This is a damaging position, because it marginalises people who are acutely aware of the harshness of human situations. Behind this criticism of indignation is the need to see everyone as equals in conflicts, considering them simultaneously as victims and aggressors, without recognising that there are conflicts in which the two groups are clearly distinguishable. In addition, being peaceful in appearance is idolised, as if it were the only expression in which the presence of grace could be recognised; in reality this is indolent. But grace also creates conflict (Luke 12:49-53), because the path to the Kingdom is not without opposition.

A third source is the *consolation experienced through sharing lives with the poor*. This consolation is related to the third kind of humility that Ignatius presents in the Exercises (SE 167) described as follows: “to imitate and be in reality more like Christ our Lord, I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor, rather than riches; insults with Christ loaded with them, rather than honours; I desire to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent in this world.” It is about sharing life with the least in society by being more like Christ. There is a Christological motivation that is located in the terrain of love for the Lord.

In the social apostolate, this current is especially present in the Workers’ Mission and the insertion communities. In these cases, the first source, compassion, is taken one step further. People are not satisfied with serving the poor, but want to live like them, share their life circumstances, their causes and their lot in life. In this pursuit, the least in society have been a school

where Jesuits can learn to live and believe. Those who have taken this leap have undergone a strong inner transformation that has affected their life-styles and their faith. They have felt unburdened and close to the Poor Christ of the Gospel. On occasion, this has meant they distanced themselves from their social origins, in an often-misunderstood exodus from life. These people in general have developed a delicate spiritual sensibility and a personal mysticism, which are necessary to value and enjoy what the world despises.

The option of being close to the poor has also led them to live in poverty. In fact, these Jesuits have discovered the joy of choosing to be poor; they have been able to “love poverty as a mother.”¹ This is demonstrated by the fact that they have adopted poverty naturally, without showing off, or justifying their choices, but by living humbly without giving it great importance. They are happier this way. Ignatius lived in this fashion, close to the poor from the day of his conversion in Loyola until the founding of the Society. He resided in hospitals for beggars and sick people and begged himself to cover his basic needs. Ignatius also found consolation among the poor.

The fourth source is *the willingness to encourage the growth of excluded communities*. Encouraging growth involves accompanying, facilitating and supporting, but not acting in their place. Accompaniment is a key concept in Ignatian spirituality. It comes from Ignatius’ trust in the fact that God acts in people when they sincerely seek Him. Those who accompany must allow God to act in people, facilitating this encounter, but without interfering in it: “it is more suitable and much better that the Creator and Lord in person communicate Himself to the devout soul... that He inflame it with His love and praise, and dispose it for the way in which it could better serve God in the future... [The one who gives the Exercises] should permit the Creator to deal directly

¹ St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, No. 287.

with the creature, and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord” (SE 15). Underlying this concept is the idea that the person is assisted by the Lord and has the means to be responsible for their own life and destiny.

Ignatian spirituality encourages accompaniment because it believes in people and their abilities. That is why the Exercises include a mentor to act as a sounding board and a guide in the participant’s development, while the Lord is the one who provides direction. The person themselves discerns standing before their reality and the Lord. The mentor gives guidance in difficult moments and helps the person open the door to grace so that they can act more freely.

In the social apostolate, people and communities are accompanied so that they can grow and are able to advance on their own. We work with them to determine objectives and goals. We don’t assume that we have solutions if they haven’t been devised with the participation of the people affected. We walk this path together. Processes are devised and no action is taken without community involvement. This is slower, but more effective. It takes a lot of patience, but it gives surety. This rationale is present in many of the social centres and some Jesuits are hardwired with this philosophy: the poor lead the way, social works are there to accompany them in their progress, give confirmation, provide training when necessary, and support.

This accompaniment is the counterbalance to a misdirected service to the poor. A service that is misguided can nullify a person and trap them in a downtrodden situation, in which they are only considered an object of charity and not masters of their own destiny. This type of service comes with its own temptations, among them the prospect of indulging in patronage. In this case a situation of mutual dependence is produced where the one administering the service needs a recipient for their own validation, and the recipient needs a patron for their protection, because they

cannot fend for themselves. When this bond is broken, it can lead to a vicious severance.

The fifth source is *the aspiration for universality*. This is about the Society broadening its horizons. Ignatius understood that the more universal the good is, the more is it divine. He wanted to spread goodness as widely as possible.² From the outset, the Society was conceived as a universal body, destined to go to far-flung corners of the world. Ignatius was clear that it was necessary to strive for a knock-on effect, because this was a way to be more encompassing and reach further. His close relationship to the elites was due to his desire to exercise a greater beneficial influence. He was seeking to be effective.

In the social apostolate, the desire to broaden perspectives has been present. This was Fr. Janssens' motivation when he called for work to go beyond charity and seek social transformation which would have greater scope. This is also found in the wording from General Congregation 32 that identified the promotion of justice as part of the mission, together with the service of faith. Justice has a universal outlook, a desire to make the world a place where all people can live with dignity. This universal desire is the one clearly introduced in this text.

Looking at things with a broader horizon has found expression in the eagerness to understand the world—in all its breadth and complexity—through research and reflection. It has also manifested itself in efforts for structural transformation, through public advocacy. Finally, it has been embodied in the creation of international and intersectoral networks that respond to global apostolic challenges.

² This is how it appears in the *Constitutions*: “The more universal the good is, the more is it divine. Hence preference ought to be given to persons and places which, once benefited themselves, are a cause of extending the good to many others who are under their influence or take guidance from them.” (No. 622).

14.2 Some Necessary Conditions

This tour through history shows that even if the spiritual sources are alive, they are not everything that matters. There are also some required conditions that allow the social area in the Society of Jesus to progress. Without them, obstacles along the way prove difficult to overcome. Perhaps not all of these conditions are needed simultaneously, but possibly at one stage or another. This makes the development of a robust social apostolate an ever-complex task.

The first condition involves *taking care of the peripheries*. The peripheries are frontiers of marginalisation where the excluded struggle for their very lives. That's why the first leap is to go out to the peripheries. Often this is the biggest leap and also the hardest one. Care is therefore carried out through direct contact with situations of human suffering. It occurs in the human encounter with pain, where people and communities struggle in order to get ahead, in the midst of many obstacles. This encounter in turn requires reflection and a study of reality, to give rise to an understanding of the complex nature of real-life situations. Direct contact and reflection are the conditions needed for real care to occur in the peripheries.

In the social apostolate's greatest accomplishments, both of these exercises have been present: closeness and research. At present, it is not difficult for closeness and research to basically occur in different institutions: contact in the social centres and research in academia. This reality requires dialogue between these two types of institutions, so that reflection and experience can nourish each other and lead to perceptive, incisive, rigorous and mobilising analyses. This dialogue, which can be the source of great creativity, is increasingly occurring, albeit with great difficulty.

A second condition is the existence of *charismatic pioneers, who are succeeded by an institutional transition*. Most chapters

have mentioned people who paved the way, through enormous strength and conviction, following their instincts to kick-start social responses and build up a network of followers. Without these charismatic people, the leap into action does not occur. They are like the spark that ignites the dried-out kindling. Each of the social centres has at least one person in their history with these characteristics: an enterprising-spirit, with a clear vision and the necessary energy to establish a work. Throughout history, the Society's Ignatian spirituality has proven itself to be helpful in giving birth to people of this nature: charismatic, enterprising, courageous and practical. It is thanks to them that most of the social works came into being.

However, this charism is not enough. These characters need to be followed by an institutional transition. From personal charism to institutional implementation. This is usually a long process because it takes time for a work to become independent from a person with enormous vision and energy. The challenge in the aftermath is for the work, and this initial charism, to support themselves without the need of a charismatic pioneer. Some of these pioneers are not able to disengage from their work, causing it to become stifled and stagnant, and as the years go by, often decades, it sinks without successors. This institutional transition—from the charism to become an institution to operating autonomously—is a difficult but indispensable step. In it, the personality of the initial pioneer is the key factor.

Research in the social apostolate has shown that both the charismatic pioneer, as well as the institution that is generally established in their aftermath, must constantly engage in an exercise of creativity. Social realities are constantly changing, sometimes abruptly. So, there are services that must change or adapt and the institution must always be ready to transform. Sometimes this requires the institution to be truly founded again so as to give new direction to the work and give it a new impetus. This case is not uncommon. This again requires caring for what happens in the

peripheries; it demands listening, reflection and, not least, discernment. At some point it may also be necessary to have the clear-sightedness not to continue on a path that may have been relevant in the past but may have ceased to be so. Creative transformation is an essential part of the institutions in the social apostolate. It is essential for them to have some form of periodic process of evaluation and renewal to allow them to concentrate on what is happening in reality, so as to put in place appropriate measures for the future.

A third condition is the *Society's institutional leadership*. In previous chapters, evidence has shown that there have been some key institutional leaders. In a hierarchical organisation like the Society, its superiors can do much to foster certain social commitments which the institutional logic alone does not prioritise. Institutional rationale seeks financial security, a good reputation, minimal risk, social license and robust human resources. The social apostolate can ensure little of this, as it requires risk-taking on behalf of the least in society. The Society's superiors are the ones who can give the impetus needed to overcome the inertia of security inherent in a large body. It is a matter of having charismatic leaders, with love for the poor and with the firm conviction that the Society should put itself at the service of the Poor Christ in the poor of this world. As we have seen in previous chapters, Fr. Janssens and Arrupe did everything in their power to commit the Society to pursuing this path. And they were successful.

The same happens in the provinces. There, provincials can do much to promote this apostolate. However, they do not remain in office for as long—six years, while being General is for life. In any case, it is a task for the diverse levels of government to decide how to support this type of apostolate which has always been in the minority in the Society.

The fourth condition is *ecclesial reflection*. As we have had the chance to see, the social apostolate has developed hand in hand

with the Church's own social reflection. On occasion, the Jesuits themselves contributed to this reflection, by participating in the process of drafting Encyclicals, for example. Other times, they received the Encyclicals and tried to take the necessary steps to put them into practice. The Encyclicals gave license to work that until then might have been viewed as marginal and not strictly priestly. Their doctrinal support is key, because it guarantees the ecclesial recognition of many of the social activities. Otherwise, many misunderstandings might arise.

14.3 Ignatian Characteristics and Tensions

In this last section, five Ignatian characteristics are detailed that are particularly relevant in the social apostolate. They are chosen for their significance to social action. They are not in any way exclusive to this apostolate, in fact they also belong to other ones, but they make up the core substance of this apostolate. They are born out of experience, so in different ways they are present in most of the social apostolate's manifestations.

Along with each characteristic, certain creative tensions are included to which they give rise. Creative tension is understood as a pair of desirable values which appear to be in conflict.³ Both values are simultaneously important, but they seem contradictory. In this way, pursuing one can come at the cost of the other. But they are creative tensions precisely because there are ways to strive for both at the same time, leading to a more fruitful result. They always require discernment, because there is no recipe to indicate what measure of each value must be applied at a given moment, or in what direction. It depends on the circumstances. Discernment is necessary.

³ A beautiful explanation of these creative tensions, described as "*polaridades evangélicas*" [evangelical polarities], can be found in Benjamín González Buelta, *Tiempo de crear: polaridades evangélicas*, Santander, Sal Terrae, 2010.

The first characteristic is *gratitude*. Gratitude is at the centre of the Christian experience, since “He [God] loved us” (1 John 4:10) and a Christian person’s entire life is a grateful reciprocation of this boundless love. In keeping with this reality, the Exercises lead to a life characterised by gratitude, in which one tries to respond generously, with the gifts one has received, to the abundance of care and affection that has been granted. The last contemplation in the Exercises, the Contemplation to Attain Love, centres on this reality. It aspires to make the retreatant aware of everything they have received, so as to foster an open and generous response from within.

Gratitude is expressed through unconditional generosity, where the person freely offers what they have, without seeking anything in return, because in reality they have already received everything beforehand. Therefore, moral obligation is not the primary driver of social action; rather it’s the loving, grateful response of those who know they have received grace in life and feel driven to unselfishly pass it on.

This characteristic can be experienced both personally and institutionally within the social apostolate, when people recognise this gratitude in their lives and, as a result, go on to rally an institutional response. This attitude clarifies motivations, facilitates the purification of intentions and gives direction to discernment. Service is no longer about receiving compensation, or reinforcing one’s ego, but honestly and unselfishly seeking the well-being of others.

The tension *between generosity and effectiveness* can be found in the context of this characteristic. Gratitude always tends towards abundance, largesse, and it intentionally does not restrict itself—reality imposes limitations later. It is generous. Generosity speaks for itself about the mystery of love. But gratitude which manifests as a desire to help others must also seek to be effective. Love invested in works aims to be effective, to have an impact.

Effectiveness is achieved through calculating and measuring what one can give, through examining what produces the best results, not the most spectacular ones. It always offers exactly what can be assimilated and enriching. It does not waste resources but distributes them with care. This is where it can be seen that generosity and effectiveness, both born of gratitude, can come into contradiction.

The social apostolate must seek ways in which both values are present simultaneously, so that its actions are seen as generous and unconditional—not self-serving or contractual—while being measured and effective at the same time. The rationale of the individual tends towards generosity while institutional rationale towards effectiveness. Both are necessary.

The second characteristic consists in *friendship with the poor*. Jesus was poor as were His disciples. He surrounded himself with poor people, and many of the people He met on His journey through life, who He helped and cherished, were also poor. Also, Ignatian spirituality invites friendship with the poor, serving them and adopting their conditions.

This friendship opens one's eyes to a reality that is often hidden from view, one which excluded people live through daily, not looking beyond the next day, in an existence without safety-nets where nothing is taken for granted. Among these people, the world's exclusionary dynamics, the disdain for those who exist at the margins, and the emptiness of all that glitters, are uncovered. Among the poor, one learns to hope and trust in the midst of difficulty. They teach resistance, joy and hope.

Friendship with the poor is transformative and alters the hearts of people and institutions that experience it. Friendship is always beneficial in itself; it is always rewarding. It brings commitment. In reality, a service to the poor unaccompanied by friendship runs the risk of depersonalising and using people. It can convert them into objects of aid. Hence why friendship is so necessary.

Historically, this relationship of friendship has led to the option for the poor. An option implies a preference. In this case preference for the excluded and not for the included. But the Christian message is addressed to all, it is universal, and the least in society are not its sole recipients. Herein lies the tension *between favouring the poor and being universal*. This has led to many misunderstandings throughout history and continues to do so today. When the preferential option for the poor was devised, it risked promoting a dichotomous vision of the world, divided between good and bad. At present, people are averse to this type of division; the danger lies in falling into the naive belief that it's no longer the case that certain rules of the game benefit some groups while disadvantaging others. This uncritical outlook tilts the playing field in favour of the included while disregarding the condition of the excluded. In tandem with the universal message, it is necessary to maintain preference for the poor.

Sometimes it is said that in reality all people are poor, because everyone has aspects of poverty in their lives. While this may be true, because nobody's life has been completely filled with grace, this is a means to avoid considering the fact that there are people and groups who are structurally disadvantaged by the way in which societies are organised. One cannot pursue universality simply by ignoring the existence of a poverty determined by historical factors. In any case, it is important to bear in mind that often the mention of the preferential option for the poor produces distress among the included.

In recent decades, we have learnt to combine these two elements in a tension. This has been done by building bridges between the included and the excluded and by establishing meeting spaces that facilitate the aforementioned mutual recognition and friendship; this is the key to unlocking the greater potential for fruitful results. The exercise of public advocacy, through awareness-raising and dealing with public decision-makers in

order to benefit the excluded, has also made a better understanding of the meaning of universality possible.

Another tension that exists in the area of friendship with the poor is *between inculturation and global belonging*. Inculturation calls for the penetration of a specific culture, to understand it and to learn from it. In the process of inculturation, people and organisations allow themselves to be shaped by a culture that is not their own. Global belonging is different: it demands participation in a humanity which spans across the entire world and which has diverse values and characteristics. This tension signals the need to pay attention to both aspects simultaneously, because inculturation without keeping the global context in mind can lapse into a type of fundamentalism, while global belonging without roots can lead to idealistic cosmopolitanism and the ignoring of local realities.

The third Ignatian characteristic to review is the *magis*. The *magis*—“greater” or “more” in Latin—appears repeatedly in the Exercises. In the Contemplation of the Kingdom (SE 91-98), Ignatius proposes to finish the prayer with a personal offering for “those who wish to give *greater* proof of their love, and to distinguish themselves in whatever concerns the service” (SE 97). From the beginning of the second week the retreatant is invited to start out on the path of greater service. In Ignatian spirituality, a good offering is not enough, rather sights are set on the greatest. Throughout the Second Week, the opening petition of the contemplation requests “intimate knowledge of our Lord... that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely” (SE 104). Again the “more” appears as the ultimate ambition of the follower of Jesus. The entire consideration on the three kinds of humility (SE 164-168) also aims to plant the seed of desire in the retreatant’s heart to imitate the Lord Jesus more closely: “to imitate and be in reality more like Christ our Lord, I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor...” (SE 167).

The *magis* that penetrates all aspects of Ignatius’ spirituality is rooted in the love and gratitude that was discussed at

the beginning of this section. Love has no measure: it always aspires to the greater good of the beloved person; mediocrity is not enough. Love yearns for the highest high and is always passion-filled. The “more” yearned for is therefore not an ethical demand, but rather a loving disposition.

This magis has found expression in the Society’s works throughout history, which have sought to accomplish a greater service, even if this was perhaps more difficult to achieve. The history of the social apostolate is full of initiatives characterised by the magis. Working and living with the workers, going to marginalised neighbourhoods to live among the poor, creating an international network of schools “where the asphalt ends”, accompanying refugees... these are all fruits of the magis. They cannot be explained by pure rationality alone; rather, they fall under the banner of boundless love and not mere calculation. For this reason, the people who initiate these activities are passionate and have, paradoxically, a touch of healthy madness,⁴ which is not readily apparent at the outset, but is revealed in the outcomes.

The magis necessarily has obstacles in its path. At the outset, daring works aren’t straightforward, but pose many threats. They appear compelling, but also somewhat rash. They are not as reasonable as one might wish. They always involve risks. Hence, the magis stirs up internal conflict, almost immediately, when voices emerge within the body of the Society, some resistant to the new initiative, others supporting it. Here tension arises *between communion and conflict*. The organisation and its leaders desire communion, a peace that prevents the loss of energy for pointless reasons. The prophets of the magis—and many of the charismatic pioneers in the social apostolate are in this category—stir up a measure of conflict because their proposals involve

⁴ In fact, in the offering mentioned (SE 167) Ignatius asks the retreatant to request “to desire to be accounted as worthless and a *fool for Christ*, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent in this world”. This is the madness described. [italics are the translator’s]

institutional risk. Tension indicates that true communion, in the service of the Kingdom, always contains a measure of conflict. It is a communion in conflict. Pure peace is anaesthetic. That is why we must be wary of lasting and profound internal peace. It might be a sign that the sense of magis has been lost. But at the same time, conflict that undoes communion is not part of an authentic magis, because organisational well-being and integrity are elements of any desirable magis. Again, this tension opens up space for discernment.

Ignatius in his exercises asks the retreatant repeatedly to request “intimate knowledge”: of sin (SE 63), of the Lord (SE 104) and of the many blessings received (SE 233). The intimate knowledge is not purely intellectual or cognitive, but emotional. It is based on analysis and is therefore rigorous when dealing with reality, but it fosters a synthesis and contains an intuitive component. It is neither clinical nor distanced from reality; rather it throws itself into reality. It is mobilising. *Intimate knowledge* is the fourth Ignatian characteristic to be noted.

This intimate knowledge has been present in the social apostolate’s works. As we have seen in this historical overview, all the initiatives undertaken were based on a knowledge of reality. There may well have been research and analysis, but above all there has been an empathetic encounter with the life, struggles, suffering and hope of people and communities. This heartfelt encounter has given birth to the desire and the quest to offer something meaningful and effective. The intuitive, emotional and mobilising intimate knowledge, which has been discussed, underpinned each undertaking.

As social works develop, they become more complex; and as time passes, intuition alone is no longer enough. At that stage it becomes necessary to develop rigorous knowledge, document data, objectively substantiate the initially subjective perceptions, and view findings against the backdrop of academia. In turn, each

new step must be firmly supported by available information, delve deeper into issues, and not lapse into trivialities or slogans. Social works eventually require academic institutions in order to move forward and be more effective. And in social works, academia gains a focal point for enlightening dialogue. This is a space of cross-pollination which still needs to be explored in greater depth.

Intimate knowledge opens up a tension that can be posed in two manners: *between wisdom and prophecy*. In secular language it might be expressed as the tension *between realism and utopia*. Wisdom penetrates the real and allows us to see the existing possibilities in the present time, their richness and nuances, and the seemingly hidden ways to live better in an ever-foggy reality. Wisdom accepts the present, takes it as given, without questioning it drastically, and helps towards living more coherently and authentically in the current circumstances. Its one risk is paralysis. In general, it might be said that it attracts the uneasiest among the included. Wisdom is realistic. Prophecy, for its part, questions the present reality and dreams of overcoming it. It criticises in order to recreate. It imagines a better future, arouses hope and is heartening. It entices the excluded. It has the potential to create, but its promises do not always come to fruition. Its risk is destruction without an alternative. Prophecy is intensely utopian. Again, as in the previous tensions, reality demands a fruitful dialogue between both extremes, to open up a space for discernment between them.

The last Ignatian characteristic that stands out is *friendship in the Lord*. The expression makes reference to Ignatius of Loyola's letter to Juan de Verdolay dated Venice, July 24th, 1537, in which he speaks about his companions in Paris, with whom he began an apostolic life, and who would later go on to form the Society of Jesus: "nine friends of mine in the Lord, all Masters of Arts, and well versed in theology, four of them Spanish, two French, two from Savoy, and one from Portugal." This so-called "friendship in the Lord" has remained as an expression of collaboration as a preferred way to respond to the mission.

Collaboration is based on mutual knowledge and affection. Its foundation is friendship. But the reference to the Lord indicates a friendship that is not confined to mere human enjoyment, but one which pursues the Kingdom, the mission. It is friendship in the Lord, which today is not understood in a reductive way to mean embracing the Jesuits, but all the people who share in the life and mission. Friendship in the Lord thus relates both to the Jesuits, as well as to all the people who collaborate in their endeavours.

The word friendship suggests that collaboration is not clinically functional; rather, it is based on esteem, mutual appreciation, and the desire to contribute to the growth of one's companions. Friendship in the Lord means shared beliefs, dreams and aspirations. This friendship gives way to shared discernment and within this to mutual acknowledgment, listening and a common quest.

Many of the Society's social works are built on this friendship in the Lord. Today it would not be possible to conceive of the Society's social apostolate without the participation of lay or religious people who are not members of the Society in the strict sense, but who share with it—and not only with individual Jesuits—friendship and the same sense of mission. They feel they belong to a body and wish to contribute to it with their lives and work.

This is where the final tension arises, which is *between the individual and the community*. The individual has their own autonomy and particular desires, concrete needs, intuitions and convictions. Individuals are diverse. Community requires internal consistency and coherence, shared meaning, a peaceful belonging. Community demands a certain degree of unity. However, individuals prosper when they collaborate and create something in common, and a community's worth is in the diversity of individuals of which it is comprised. There is therefore tension, but also a need for both. Again, the dynamic area of discernment that has already been

discussed emerges between the two poles. Usually this tension is an extremely enriching one, as when people give the best of themselves in the midst of day-to-day interpersonal friction, the mission community is strengthened. But sometimes the experience can be a dramatic one if individuals demand realities from the community which, if granted, would weaken or break it. Then, either the individuals or the community must make changes, which can be very painful and very difficult.

Gratitude, friendship with the poor, magis, intimate knowledge and friendship in the Lord are five characteristics of Ignatian spirituality that are particularly present and rich in the social apostolate. They enhance the service to the poor and the promotion of justice; they give it direction and the way of proceeding. Delving deeper into these characteristics may support us to better serve every day in favour of a more humane and more just world.



Epilogue

Ignatius and his first companions served the poor and sought ways to live among them. This started a tradition of service to the poor that continues to this day. Caring for the sick, visiting prisoners in jails, caring for slaves and reconciling the estranged were part of the apostolic lives of the first generations of Jesuits, but this tradition did not end with them. The compassionate practice of mercy towards the least in society has continued to this day as an ever-present aspect of life in the Society.

Societies today bear little resemblance to those of the past, so great has the transformation been. However, the same impetus that stirred the Jesuits to serve the excluded in the early days is the same one that moves them today to promote justice. In this, the Jesuits seek not only to alleviate the suffering situation of the poor, but also to change the social circumstances that marginalise them. The aim is to produce structural transformation and not just temporarily remedy the living conditions of the excluded. Jesuits work locally, but their concern is universal.

Serving the poor and promoting justice are two complementary aspects of the same desire to see the least in society both survive and live a full life. These are two forms in which the social apostolate is expressed today.

The historical overview presented has allowed us to see the richness of this social ministry over the course of slightly more than a century. The history is full of creativity and new initiatives,

discrete efforts and large endeavours. This is the sign that the development of this apostolate has been *animated by listening to the Spirit*. It is a Spirit that gives impetus, direction and it is the heart-beat for the constant concern for the fate of the least in society. This initiates processes, sometimes on a very small scale, but ones which, with the passage of time, can produce great fruits. Accomplishments such as *Fe y Alegría*, the Jesuit Refugee Service and the foundation of social centres are testament to this.

Listening to the Spirit has also meant entering *into dialogue with history*: without passing over reality, but trying to understand it in its complexity, its pain and with its possibilities opened up. The social apostolate has reflected on reality from the perspective of the poor, looking for ways to respond to their needs. The history of this apostolate and its ability to adapt to each era reflects this capacity to dialogue with reality, without lapsing into repetitive or stereotypical responses.

The poor are still among us, despite the fact that humanity has the required means to eradicate their misery and exclusion. The social apostolate's historical accomplishments show that it is possible to make a contribution to give their lives dignity. For this reason, this volume wants to be a song of hope and a tribute to so many men and women who have collaborated in the Society's social apostolate, and continue to do so today, working so that the excluded may have a life, and a life in abundance.

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This book offers a historical overview of the social apostolate of the Society of Jesus from 1891—the date on which Leo XIII wrote the first social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*—to the present day. In it, one can appreciate the variety of proposals offered throughout all these years, adapted to each concrete historical moment.

This overview shows how the social apostolate has been carried out in constant dialogue with history, since concrete social problems and their evolution have directed the social work of the Society.

In turn, this apostolate has been animated by listening to the Spirit. It has shown an overflowing creativity in its accomplishments and has been characterized by audacity and generosity. The desire to serve the poor at all times and to promote justice, in order to give birth to a more human and solidary world sprang from them.

This volume wants to be a song of hope and a tribute to so many men and women who have collaborated in this social commitment of the Society and continue to do so today, working so that those who are excluded may have life and life in abundance.

The author, **PATXI ÁLVAREZ DE LOS MOZOS, SJ**, has worked for years in the NGO ALBOAN, in contact with the social works of the Society of Jesus on several continents. This exercise continued during his service to the Society in Rome as Secretary of Social Justice and Ecology from 2011 to 2017. This has taken him to many corners of the world where the Society of Jesus serves excluded people and communities and promotes a more just world. His experience is part of the background of this book.

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