

On the frontiers of knowledge and cultures

1. Right from the beginning, the Society of Jesus has considered as a proper dimension of its mission received from the Church and the successor of Peter, the commitment to the intellectual work. This long and remarkable tradition is known to all and it has continued up to our times. In the eyes of many, it has characterized the service the Society can and must render the Church and it has given rise up to our days to legitimate expectations in our regards: there is need for religious capable of joining spiritual vigour and intellectual rigour as they go to the “frontiers” of knowledge and of cultures. Far from dreading the work of the intellect, the Society has always sought to understand the issues and has given itself with that generosity of spirit and that “big heart” without which no one ventures beyond that which is already familiar to him. In keeping with this tradition, we wish to live it as a demand and responsibility for the whole body of the Society, in all our present missions.
2. In his letter of the 1st January 2003, Fr. P. H. Kolvenbach communicated to the Society five apostolic preferences “as many urgencies that were revealed in a prayerful discernment on the level of the whole Society”. The third concerned the intellectual apostolate, about which he wrote: “the situation of our world, with the hot issues humanity faces, and the expectations of the Church concerning the Society, call also, on the part of the Provinces and the Conferences of Major Superiors, for a specific commitment to the directly intellectual apostolate”. During its discussions, the 35th General Congregation has become strongly aware of the crucial issues proper to the intellectual work today in the Society and the Church. There it calls us to consider the urgency of a renewed presence of the Society in the fields and institutions where the intellectual work is practiced, in diverse forms: what is at stake is our apostolic commitment in the other fields where we are “called to a ministry nourished by knowledge” (34th GC, D 26, § 6).
3. Pope Benedict XVI reminded us on many occasions that “among the urgent and present needs of the Church” to which the Society must be able to respond faithfully, it seems “important to indicate the intellectual commitment in the fields of theology and philosophy as well as in the dialogue with modern culture” (22nd April 2006). Faced with the radically new questions which our societies meet in many areas (sciences of life, anthropology, personal and social ethics, positive sciences, the family and the human community...), we measure to what extent the desire to help souls is realized through a new commitment in the fields of knowledge where man asks questions about himself and the world, about the meaning of human existence and the future of our societies. The interior demand on Christian faith to give account of the hope it carries, as well as the theological work and research, oblige us not to abandon these “new lands” and to

acknowledge in them places where the Society of Jesus can, by bringing what it is and what it lives, aim at the most universal service.

4. Each one is conscious of the profound changes which, in the last two decades, have transformed our societies: the communicational revolution which was produced by computing and internet, globalization which marks all the dimensions of our lives, a plurality of philosophical and religious concepts that is more and more evident, but also the rise of religious fundamentalism, the marginalisation of peoples and complete cultures, the awareness that our earth is perishable... In a complex and difficult world, wounded by so much violence and so many injustices, we have to face both the effects and the causes of that which seems to disfigure man's face: going to the roots of the present cultural, social and spiritual challenges supposes a determined commitment in a resolved intellectual work; we must know and understand what is at stake so as to be able to resist the unacceptable and propose other futures. We cannot live "The Society's commitment for a radical life of faith, which find its expression in the promotion of justice for all" (34th GC, D 2, § 8) together unless a sufficient number of Jesuits allow, by their investment and their intellectual work, to accept the challenges which are, in the foundation, those of the modern intellect.

5. The 35th General Congregation:
 - Asks that young Jesuits be oriented towards the intellectual work without fear of the necessary investments for in-depth studies and true specialisation. Many young Jesuits, in many parts of the world, are attracted by the intellectual work and conscious of the Society's own mission in this field. It is important that they find in the communities in which they live or will live, the necessary fraternal support and that they live their personal mission as a dimension of the global mission of the Society which unites the service of faith and the promotion of justice.
 - Asks that the Society works more as an international body and favours possible synergies. It is important that the government of the Society permit and ensure the links between persons, teams, centres and magazines engaged in the intellectual work. It will mean promoting networking, constituting poles of excellence wherever men and means may be brought together and thus avoiding the dispersion of our forces, choosing the institutions which, through the cooperation of other Provinces, will guarantee the research work necessary in the most crucial fields.
 - Asks the government of the Society, on the level of the Assistancies and Conferences, ensure the conservation of the intellectual and cultural heritage of the Society or its redistribution.