

**Message of Father General Arturo Sosa on 2019 07 16**  
**Sogang University in Seoul, South Korea**  
**to Representatives from the Administration, Faculty, Students and Alumni**  
**after brief reflections by Representatives of Sogang**  
**on the meaning of a „Jesuit” university**

Thank you very much for these presentations. It is really good for me to hear about the concerns, even if I am unable to respond to the very concrete proposals that you make. The most important thing would be for me to just listen for now, and to know that you are listening to each other in this session. It is my hope that those who can more directly address these concerns more immediately can seriously consider the good points you raise – about funding and salaries, about working more closely with other universities, about issues of governance.

It is really very obvious that the role of the university is very important in today’s world. It is especially important that the community here in Sogang University – your administrators and leaders, your professors, your students, and your other partners in mission – should constantly reflect on what it means to be in the Jesuit tradition. Otherwise, the name ‘Jesuit’ becomes merely a brand-name like ‘Gucci’ or ‘Dior’, that is used by many as a matter of display and show, but has no substance. Much has been said about the high quality of education at Sogang because of its Jesuit roots. The question for me is: So what is this quality for? Is there a purpose for maintaining this?

With that in mind, allow me to share my thoughts, some of which might also be relevant to some of your concerns, though certainly not all. I divide my presentation in 3 parts. First, I will re-emphasize some key characteristics of Jesuit universities today. Second, I will focus on what is known as the “intellectual apostolate”. Third, I will discuss the social engagement that is part of the mission of any Jesuit university.

**1) First, the characteristics of Jesuit universities today.**

**A. The quality of our students**

In an address to the Jesuit University of Santa Clara community in California in 2000, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach says something very important to remember: “The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become”. (6.10.2000)

Last year, in July of 2018, in my address to the Jesuit universities’ representatives gathered in Loyola I echoed Fr. Kolvenbach, saying that: “We aspire to being recognised for the human quality of our graduates, not only because of their high standard to operate in a competitive employment market.(...)”

(...) We seek to educate consistent individuals, who are responsible for themselves, for others and for the earth that we all inhabit.”

Hence, the first indicator to watch out for are the women and men who graduate from Sogang. If they turn out to be, in Fr. Arrupe’s sometimes worn-out and sometimes little-understood phrase, truly “women and men for others”, then Sogang can be called a success, even if you need more resources, even if there are problems of university governance.

**B. The Sogang community as promoter of life and reconciliation**

A second indicator has to do with the orientation and self-understanding of a university as a unified entity, as a community, as our young student rightly emphasizes. Ideally, the Jesuit university of the twenty-first century is one that sees itself as a “source of a reconciled life”, a

center for reconciliation and a center with a clear value for life. The Jesuit university sees itself as part of the growing commitment of the Society of Jesus to effectively contribute to enabling a dignified full life for each and every human being, both in the present and in the future. With this in mind, the university then incarnates this clear and unified mission through its many structures, competencies, and networks.

This concern for life and reconciliation draws directly from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, and his mediation on the incarnation which looks at the world and at history with the love of the One and Triune God. In so doing, we cannot but be moved by the cry of the millions of human beings who migrate seeking better living conditions; of the victims of violence; of the impoverished who demand justice; of those who are despised for the colour of their skin or the religion they profess; of those who are denied their rights to participate democratically in public life, because political power is monopolised by people at the service of individual interests, indifferent to the Common Good and the protection of the environment. In the meditation of St. Ignatius, it is this loving gaze upon the world that leads to the sending of Jesus, to be human like all of us, and so show the way to salvation and freedom.

Adopting the perspective represents a considerable challenge for our research work, which is aimed at a deep understanding of all human reality, in order to enrich human life. In other words, there is a clear intentionality in our studies. For those involved in the analysis of human societies and its problems, it inevitably leads to the task of discovering and understanding the roots of injustice and inequality, and proposing viable alternatives for economic and social transformation. This perspective also becomes a pedagogical challenge when we teach in our classrooms, and we must always ask ourselves whether and how we are able to transmit the value for human life, that is at the heart of all this.

### C. Sogang as a university for social transformation

It is from this way of seeing, of placing ourselves vis-à-vis reality, that we come to move towards the preferential option for the poor, by which **the university becomes a *project of social transformation to generate a full life***.

The Society of Jesus has found in the University a formidable space to put into practice the mission received from and inspired by the Gospel, to determinedly promote social justice and environmental sustainability through dialogue with cultures and religions. The University promotes processes of knowledge creation and accompanies processes of human education in which, together with knowledge, it transmits the meaning of a reconciled and peaceful life.

To all this, I would add that Jesuit Higher Education necessarily includes political formation. This means forming women and men to become world citizens, who care for and bear a sense of responsibility towards the world, the planet, human life itself. If those who study or work in an educational institution of the Society of Jesus turn out to be individualists whose ultimate concern is their own good and self-preservation, then something has gone very wrong.

We must acknowledge that the orientation towards life is rooted in the humanist character of Jesuit education. The Jesuit tradition for universities has valued and supported each individual's process, caring for individuality, *cura personalis* is the phrase we use, while at the same time helping them to step out of themselves to take charge of humanity and open up to transcendence.

## 2) Second, about what has been called the “intellectual apostolate” of the Society of Jesus

I reiterate something Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach said in 2001, which is still very much true today. He said: “The Society ... still considers the intellectual apostolate along the lines of its mission to be of the highest importance. In a world at once globalized and diversified, one cannot expect the Society to give universal norms valid for all contexts. The fundamental criterion will always be the greater divine service and the good of souls, and the wise Ignatian principle of ‘adapting to places, times and persons.’”

Fr. Kolvenbach also notes, “Not all Jesuits are called to work in the intellectual apostolate, but each one is called to competent and serious work in whatever field he is involved, including the pastoral and social areas.” In this sense, the intellectual apostolate is not just an apostolic sector but a characteristic of the charism of the Society of Jesus and a dimension of our way of proceeding that should be present in every Jesuit apostolate.

The goal of the intellectual apostolate is to seek *wisdom*. For the university and all institutions run by the Society of Jesus, it is not enough to reach intellectual depth to develop knowledge and transmit it as an element of overall human education. The real challenge is that it should be an *apostolate*, that is, a way to more effectively announce the Good News of the Gospel, to learn to grasp the presence of God in the world and the action of his Spirit in history in order to join in it and contribute to human liberation.

Wisdom exists through its embodiment in *wise people* who make it present among us. Wisdom is not an accumulation of knowledge that is housed in a person's brain or in books, virtual memories, libraries or mega servers. Wisdom is an attribute that is recognised in those people whose degree of human, affective and intellectual maturity means that meeting allows us to see beyond the ordinary in our surroundings and within ourselves. Being a wise person is, then, a question of love, of seeking that *wisdom* that wants to be found in history and in creation.

A University under the responsibility of the Society of Jesus is therefore called upon, to create. This creative ability is demonstrated above all in its ability to anticipate issues in terms of time, to be several steps ahead. A university should be capable of seeing beyond the present because it cultivates and finds its nourishment in an inspiring and illuminating historical memory.

## 3) Priorities for Jesuit universities in the context of social engagement

Ours is a time marked by the tension between secularism and religious and ideological fundamentalisms, in which the *Catholic* presence in the university takes on a new meaning.

The university is a diverse environment in which the conditions for dialogue and in-depth understanding of historical, personal and intellectual processes are produced. It is a privileged space for exercising human freedom. Freedom to *search and find* the paths of social transformation through research and teaching. It is a space in which the message of liberation of the Good News of the Gospel can contribute to finding better ways to generate life in the midst of difficulties and uncertainty, which seem to overwhelm the daily lives of most men and women, opening a space for hope to enter.

To live all the dimensions of our charism in a secular world that opens new opportunities.

To do this, we are invited to work more closely **as collaborators** and **in collaboration** as part of our identity. We are very conscious of the complexity of Higher Education. We should think

of ourselves as collaborators of a complex mission in which we share responsibilities with so many others.

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Once more, I thank you all for the warm reception, for the sharing of ideas and concerns (especially from our three presentors), and for giving me the opportunity to express my own concerns for you, here in Sogang University.