

**Message of Father General Arturo Sosa on 2019 07 29**  
**Fu Jen Faculty of Theology of Saint Robert Bellarmine**  
**in New Taipei City, Taiwan (R.O.C.)**  
**to Representatives from the Administration, Faculty, Students and Alumni**

Good afternoon to you, friends in the Fu Jen Faculty of Theology of St. Robert Bellarmine. I am happy to make this visit.

On behalf of the Society of Jesus, I thank you most especially for the partnership in mission that we share, especially in the light of three important frontiers to which the Lord calls you in a special way. These frontiers are:

- the frontier of preparing men and women for a variety of responsibilities within the Church;
- the frontier of the importance of your mission to the Chinese peoples; and
- the frontier of what has been called in the Society of Jesus, “the intellectual apostolate”.

Allow me to say something brief about each of these.

1. First, the preparation of women and men who will assume important responsibilities within the Church

You are engaged in this very important service to the Church, particularly through the instruction that you give, and the reflection that you facilitate. At the end of their formation in Sacred Theology and the Religious Sciences, your students – seminarians, religious men and women, and most especially the laity – then become agents of continuing growth in the Church.

Therefore, it is critical to your mission that you be able to do solid theological reflection that is relevant to current realities, while still being faithful. The words of GC 34 (Decree 16, nn.7-8) say it best, and I quote:

“Father Pedro Arrupe named theological reflection as one of the four priority apostolates of the Society of Jesus. Among the urgent contemporary issues needing theological reflection, he listed humanism, freedom, mass culture, economic development, and violence. ... Theological reflection, social analysis, and discernment are phases of a process which Pope John XXIII and Vatican II called ‘reading the signs of the times’: the effort to discern the presence and activity of God in the events of contemporary history in order to decide what to do as servants of the Word. This will bring the perennial sources of Catholic theology to bear upon the lived experiences, individual and communal, of the members of the faith community that is the Church, especially their experience of poverty and oppression; it relates Catholic theology to the secular disciplines, especially philosophy and the social and natural sciences, in order to discern, illuminate, and interpret the opportunities and problems of contemporary life. ... Theological research and reflection in service of the Gospel can thus help to respond to the broadest questions of the human mind and the deepest yearnings of the human heart.

## 2. Second, the importance of the mission to the Chinese peoples

It is important to underline that this is the only ecclesiastical faculty of theology which uses Mandarin Chinese as the language of instruction. I am told that a good number of your students come from Mainland China, and that many others come from other Chinese-speaking local churches, here in Taiwan, and in many other countries.

I mention Mainland China in a special way, because this was one of the apostolic preferences identified by Father General Kolvenbach in 2003. In my letter of promulgation of the new Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) last February, I explicitly mention that with regard to the previous preferences which “have guided us for more than fifteen years, several processes have been initiated which **must be continued.**”

In other words, the call to assist in the apostolate for China continues to be an important concern for the Church, and for the Society of Jesus. The recent accord between the Vatican and China shows the importance that Pope Francis, as well as Pope Benedict before him, gives to the mission there.

Much work is needed especially in the area of forming new local leaders and evangelizers for the Mainland – in theological reflection, spiritual accompaniment, and pastoral skills development. So whatever effort this Faculty can give would constitute a very important contribution.

## 3. Third, the call to engage in what has been called “the intellectual apostolate”

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 that not all Jesuits are called to the intellectual life, and not all instructors in a Faculty like this, are either. But each one is called to competent and serious work in whatever field he is involved. 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.

This is why the dimension of intellectual depth is basic to the implementation of the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs), promulgated last February. It is not mentioned as one of the new preferences, but it is expected to be an integral part each and every UAP. Without it, one cannot really be responsive to the call of the times.

The goal of the intellectual work is to seek wisdom. It is not enough 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.

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Once again, I am truly grateful for the work that you do. And I hope and pray that you move forward in this mission, with new energy, creativity, and fidelity, guided by the Holy Spirit, in preparing for the future of the Church. Thank you for your attention.