

Staying Faithful to the Jesuit Mission in Our Schools

Boston, MA
July 31, 2012

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Prologue: Dialogue with the astronauts

One of the most beautiful and inspirational moments I have experienced over my recent years of service alongside the Holy Father was his conversation with the astronauts.

In May last year the European Space Agency asked if it would be possible to establish a live satellite connection between the Pope and astronauts aboard the International Space Station in orbit around the Earth.

Something similar had been done various times in the past, when astronauts from a particular nation had had the opportunity to speak to their prime minister or president, but this time the aim was more ambitious.

It was a moment in which the Space Station was housing two full crews who were in the process of relieving one another. There were two Italians and therefore the Italian Space Agency was involved and had the idea of suggesting a dialogue with the Pope. When the other astronauts learnt about it they were immediately very interested and all twelve wanted to participate: Americans, Germans ... a Russian woman.

I will spare you the details of how the link was arranged, the fact that it was delayed three times due to technical reasons, and then that it had to take place at the precise moment the Space Station was passing over Europe, etc.; but in the end it all went very well. The astronauts arranged themselves in an ordered group, holding on to one another so as not to float away here and there; the woman's hair was loose and hanging in the air due to the lack of gravity, and the Pope's gaze as he watched them on the screen and spoke to them was full of curiosity.

In the fifteen minutes he had available, rather than delivering a long address, the Pope posed some very significant questions, and the dialogue between him and them became very interesting.

He asked about how they saw the Earth from so high up and what they thought of the fact that so many bloody conflicts exist; about the possibility of science being of service to peace; about the future of our planet, so beautiful yet so fragile; about the protection of the environment and the survival of future generations; about the importance of international collaboration for the good of humankind; about scientific research and the beauty of exploring the universe; about raising our eyes to the immensity of space and admiring its beauty in a way that inevitably turns into prayer, and (something fundamental for us as educators) about what they should say to the young when they returned to Earth. Here are some of the astronauts' words:

"We can look down and see our beautiful Planet Earth that God has made, and it is the most beautiful planet in the whole Solar System. However, if we look up, we can see the rest of the universe, and the rest of the Universe is out there for us to go explore. And the International Space Station is just one symbol, one example of what human beings can do when we work together constructively. So one of our most important messages is to let the children of the planet know, the young people of the planet know that there is a whole universe for us to go explore. And when we do it together, there is nothing that we cannot accomplish"

"When we have a moment to look down, beauty is capturing my heart. And I do pray: I do pray for me, for our families, for our future..."

Before the flight the Pope had given one of the astronauts, as a symbolic gift to carry into space, a medal with a reproduction of the fresco depicting the creation of man on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel: the finger of God the Creator giving life to man, His most magnificent creation. ... During their conversation, the astronauts passed the medal from one to another, making it swing gently in the air before the Pope's eyes.

Very few times in my life have I experienced with such intensity the words of St. Ignatius when, at the beginning of our contemplation of the Incarnation during the Spiritual Exercises, he invites us to see how God looked at the Earth and at what men do there and how things proceed there; then how He decided to send His Son to save humankind.

How many terrible things happen among men on the Earth! How fragile the Earth is in man's hands! Yet also, how many wonderful things can happen on the Earth! How many extraordinary things humanity can do if well guided! How high the spirit of man can soar!

The mission of the Society of Jesus

The Son of God's mission to mankind, as decided by the Trinity while contemplating our Earth, came about so that men might find the right path on their journey in the world, that they might understand the reason for which they were created, the significance of the fact that they were called into life, their responsibility for all created things. St. Ignatius speaks of leading us "to the goal for the sake of which we were created" or - with the words of our faith - "to be saved".

This mission of the Son of God continues in the life of the Church and of the Society of Jesus; that mission gives meaning to our own specific mission as educators in the schools founded and run by the Society of Jesus.

In October we and the whole Church will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Vatican Council II, which we must continue to consider as a vital "compass" for life in our times, as the formulation of the mission of the Church in the modern world.

In the light of the guidance of the Council, over succeeding decades the Society of Jesus has celebrated five General Congregations (which, as you know, are the gatherings of representatives from the Society of Jesus throughout the world), on average one every ten years, in order to continue to reflect upon and reformulate its specific mission in the light of changing times and different cultural contexts.

Faithful to its origins, the mission of the Society of Jesus has always been defined as a "service of faith". However, over time this service of faith has become enriched with new characteristics, and has been seen from perspectives which have enabled it to interact with new problems.

Thus the service of faith has increasingly had to interact with the secularisation of the modern world, and has been seen as being indissolubly linked to the promotion of the justice of the Kingdom announced by Christ. This has certainly been influenced by the intense reflections of the Church on the theme of justice in which, among others, Jesuits and Latin American theologians have been particularly active. The pairing of faith-justice can be achieved in the modern world through inculturation and dialogue with people from different cultures and religious traditions. In this context, inter-religious dialogue has been heavily influenced by the experience of Jesuits in Asia; Jesuits have been reflecting upon inculturation since the time of Father Arrupe, and Africa too has made its own specific contribution.

The Society of Jesus' mission is not, then, to dedicate itself to one specific activity, as is the case with other religious congregations which were founded to teach, to cure the sick or for other ends. It has a broad and comprehensive mission which today includes, as fundamental aspects of the service of faith, commitment to justice, and dialogue with the cultures, traditions and religious experience of the people among who we live. These factors are always present together, although in different "doses" depending on the situation in the various parts of the world.

Our most recent General Congregation, the thirty-fifth, forcibly confronted the mission of the Society of Jesus with the rapid transformations of today's world, in particular globalisation with all its ambiguities, possibilities and risks; and scientific and technological progress, particularly in the field of communications, and its consequent repercussions on culture and our view of the human person and human society.

With this in mind and taking account of the conflicts, divisions and tensions which affect mankind, society and even the individual in so many different ways, the thirty-fifth General Congregation chose to describe the mission of the Society of Jesus as a vocation aimed at reconciliation; that is, at establishing a just and reconciled relationship with God, with others and with the creation. Thus it laid down a broad framework which includes man's religious and spiritual dimension, his social and relational aspects, and his responsibility for the creation, the environment in which he lives and in which he traces his path through history.

Three words of Pope Benedict XVI

The mission of the Society of Jesus is, of course, part of the mission of the Church, and the Society emphasises the fact that, in carrying out that mission, it receives guidance from the Pope himself who, having a view over the universal panorama of the world and the Church, is best placed to identify the priorities for the work of the Society. The documents of the latest General Congregation also contain continuous references to the Pope's words to Jesuits concerning the great importance of their service to the Church in today's world. I believe, then, that it is natural - and all the more so in view of my own personal service - for us to examine some of the main themes identified by Pope Benedict XVI in speaking about the mission of the Church, themes which are very important for us to consider here at this conference.

"New evangelisation". A few days ago I was speaking to an American Jesuit father who teaches theology at a high school here in the United States. He told me that the vast majority of the students who follow his lessons have almost no basic knowledge of our Christian faith. However, they are often well motivated, free from negative prejudices and open to interesting discussions, not only about education and theory but involving all aspects of life, such as for example moments of prayer and the examination of conscience.

Today we cannot take it for granted that a foundation of Christian culture and formation exists among young people. I believe that this is an increasingly common experience in many parts of the world, and it is particularly prevalent in areas with a longstanding Christian tradition where secularisation is making rapid advances, where faith is largely absent from contemporary culture and communication, and where the capacity of families to transmit the faith is becoming weaker, indeed the family itself is often in crisis or no longer exists. In other parts of the world we have to take account of the fact that many students are not Catholic or not Christian.

In any case, increasingly often our educational service is a seedbed in which to instil the basic principles of faith and of Christian life into young people who no longer come to us already trained in, or at least oriented towards, a Christian education.

This is one aspect of the general situation of the Church in today's world. It was the reason that John Paul II began to speak about "new evangelisation", and that Benedict XVI has chosen to dedicate the forthcoming Synod of Bishops to the same subject, due to be held in Rome in October this year with representatives from all over the world. As part of the same process, Benedict XVI has also called the "Year of Faith", in order to raise the Church's awareness about the current situation and to stimulate the desire to announce Christ to a world which has such need but does not know the Gospel: either because it no longer knows it or because it has never known it.

With great humility we must recognise that the way in which we have transmitted the faith for so long is no longer effective today. The language we used to use has lost its meaning, and we are not present in the environments in which young people live, communicate and grow. ... In his book/interview "Light of the World" the Pope states this clearly, also giving some examples. "Modern man no longer immediately understands that the blood of Christ on the Cross was spilt in atonement for our sins. These concepts are great and true, yet they no longer find a place in our *forma mentis* and in our image of the world. They

must, so to speak, be translated and understood afresh. We must, for example, understand that the concept of evil truly needs to be reconceived; it cannot simply be set aside and forgotten. It must be reconceived and transformed from within".

Serving the faith and committing ourselves to the "new evangelisation" is, then, a primary requirement for the mission of the Society of Jesus and the Church, one we cannot and must not avoid.

"Educational emergency". In a series of talks about the pastoral care of the Church in Italy and in the diocese of Rome, the Pope has often spoken of an "educational emergency, confirmed by the failures which too often crown our efforts to form well-rounded individuals, capable of collaborating with others and of giving meaning to their lives". Often a sense of distrust and frustration spreads among parents and educators when they see the difficulties they have to face to achieve good results in the formation of young people.

Sometimes the responsibility is attributed to the fragility of the new generations, sometimes to the "generation gap" which make the transmission of values problematic. Benedict XVI notes that, "in reality, it is not only the individual responsibilities of adults and young people that are involved, but also a more widespread mindset: a mentality and a form of culture that lead people to doubt the value of the human person, the meaning of truth and good and, in the final analysis, the goodness of life itself. In such a situation it becomes difficult to transmit any worthwhile and certain values from one generation to another: rules of behaviour and credible goals around which people can build their lives".

This is the problem of "relativism" in our culture. Faced with this situation, in which often "the foundations are shaken and essential certainties are lacking" (a situation I imagine you all understand, given the global influence of secularised Western culture), the vital importance of authentic education becomes manifest, and not an education which limits "itself to imparting notions and information while ignoring the great question of truth, above all of that truth which can be a guide to life".

Furthermore, education must help people to find a balance between freedom and discipline, forming characters day after day and not reneging on its responsibility to identify rules of behaviour and life, while preparing people to face the challenges that the future will certainly bring (Letter from the Pope to the diocese and the city of Rome on the vital importance of education, 21 January 2008).

We all feel the need for this kind of education: parents, teachers, society, and the young people themselves who do not want to be left to face the challenges of life alone. This is the education that the pedagogical tradition of the Society of Jesus has always sought to impart, and it remains vitally important today.

Pope Benedict XVI's remarks about the educational emergency include an interesting point which, in my view, is important if we are to find a balance between the various aspects of education. He believes that, in order to combat scepticism and relativism, we must draw from three main sources: nature, Revelation and history. We must learn to understand nature as God's creation, full of divine words addressed to us. It must be seen not in mechanical terms, as a great "machine", but interpreted, understood and admired in order to ensure that it is not exploited and ravaged. It must be cultivated and administered for the good of humankind, as the astronauts said in their dialogue with the Pope at the beginning of my talk. Moreover, we must learn to understand our own cultural and religious history. God's Revelation gives us fundamental guidance which must be discovered and applied in the new situations man always meets on his journey; it helps us humbly to understand and appreciate the dignity and vocation of the human person.

Pope Benedict concluded one of his talks on this subject with a fine definition summarising exactly what education is: "Education means forming new generations so that they know how to relate to the world, strengthened by a significant memory, by a shared inner patrimony of real knowledge which, while recognising the transcendent goal of life, guides thoughts, emotions and judgements " (Address to the Italian Episcopal Conference, 27 May 2010).

These remarks have already introduced us to the third theme to emerge from the Pope's words: **faith and reason**. Modern culture has been profoundly influenced by science and the demands of rationality. Indeed, the power of human reason, developed through science and technology, has been exalted to the point of

creating the illusion that it alone can resolve all problems and overcome all obstacles, rejecting any other source of regulation. It is vitally necessary to help people understand that the Christian faith is not in any way averse to reason; rather it is its friend and ally, on condition that reason does not close in upon itself excluding and marginalising the faith.

Reason, if it becomes entirely autonomous, is exposed to the risk of arrogance, it loses a sense of man's limitations, of the need for ethics to guide behaviour, of the values of solidarity, gratuitousness and love to ensure that coexistence and the journey of peoples and of the human race retain a sense of humanity and purpose.

On all the important occasions he has addressed the modern world (such as British society at Westminster Hall, the German Parliament in Berlin, the political and cultural worlds of Africa in Cotonou, etc., when he has explicitly raised the issue of the relationship between the Church's faith and the great questions of peoples and modern societies), Benedict XVI has always spoken of the complementarity of reason and faith, their reciprocal need of one another in order to ensure an overall equilibrium in the journey of mankind.

Economic and social justice also requires great commitment on the part of human reason, a reason which must have the courage to face the increasing complexity of globalised problems, but which must remain aware that it is limited, guided and oriented by the search for truth. In this way reason will not become an instrument in the search for absolute power, which is always a latent risk and has found expression, for example, in the tragedies of totalitarianism or the craze for profit which has led to the economic crisis currently affecting so many countries of the world.

The dialogue between faith and the natural and human sciences, between faith and art, between faith and culture in all its expressions, is one of the most pressing imperatives of our time. It is the necessary continuation of Vatican Council II's message on the Church and the modern world, and has been an essential element of the mission of the Society of Jesus ever since its origins.

Education must present young people with a continuous and increasingly profound search for the truth about things, about coexistence and human history, about the relationship between each one of us and the mystery of God. This is a fascinating adventure which can last an entire lifetime, and it is the education we must seek to achieve in order to respond to the essential needs of humanity.

Please allow me to express my own immense personal respect for secondary education, the education to which you dedicate your lives. I will quote from a famous speech delivered by Father Arrupe to your predecessors in 1980. "Distinct from primary education and university education, secondary education gives us access to the minds and hearts of the young, of boys and girls, at an important moment in their development: when they are capable of a coherent and reasoned assimilation of human values illuminated by Christianity, but when their personalities have not yet acquired traits that are difficult to modify. It is above all in secondary education that the mentality of young people undergoes systematic formation. Consequently, it is the time in which they must create a harmonious blend between faith and modern culture" (Fr Arrupe, *I nostri colleghi oggi e domani*, Rome 1980, no. 2). This was certainly my own experience fifty years ago when my vocation to the religious life as a Jesuit came into being as a life choice. Therefore I continue to believe that this is fundamentally true.

Returning to the educational tradition of the Society of Jesus

I do not think that I have to remind you of the documents concerning the educational activities of the Society of Jesus in secondary education; you probably know them better than I do. Certainly, when I was Provincial in the 1980s it was with great joy that I received the text: *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education* which, I felt, clearly and effectively expressed the fascinating relationship between the Ignatian view of the world and of man, the pedagogy of the Spiritual Exercises, and the pedagogy we must practise in our own educational institutes in accordance with our mission.

However, I would like to recall a number of points about our educational activity which have been highlighted by Fathers General, in relation to the updating and modernisation of the mission of the Society of Jesus.

Arrupe

Father Arrupe gave great emphasis to the issue of forming people for service, a service in keeping with the Gospel. He used the famous phrase "men and women for others" to identify the kind of people we wish to form; this means forming them in faith, but faith works through charity and charity translates into actions of justice and solidarity. In this ideal view of the person it is easy to see the translation of the Ignatian ideal "to love and serve in all things", and that of the dual aspect of the Society's mission as it was formulated following the Council: "service of faith and promotion of justice". All efforts towards academic success and excellence must be clearly guided, not by egoism and the desire to impose of one's own personality upon others, but by generous service to other people and to society.

Father Arrupe also highlighted the need to form people "open to their own time and to the future", people capable of continually meeting change and new challenges throughout their lives, with optimism and courage. For this reason it is vitally important to educate people to critically evaluate novelties and to show responsible freedom.

Finally, Father Arrupe identified the ideal of a "balanced" person. I find this aspect of striving after balanced integration particularly interesting. "The ideal of our colleagues", he said, "is not to produce little academic monsters, dehumanised and introverted, nor devout believers allergic to the world in which they live and incapable of resonating". And he went on: "Our ideal is closer to the Greek model, in its Christian version; balanced, serene and constant, open to everything that is human". Father Arrupe also turned his attention to the relationship between technology and humanism, saying: "The mission of our centres of education is to save humanism, but without renouncing the use of technology". (Fr. Arrupe, *I nostri colleghi oggi e domani*, 1980, no. 14). It is my belief that the tradition of the Society of Jesus continually calls us to maintain an equilibrium between, on the one hand, an academic formation in keeping with the times and, on the other, an appreciation and taste for humanism, including such aspects as history, art, philosophy and the uplifting contemplation of beauty. If we think of a figure such as Matteo Ricci, who was such an eminent expression of Jesuit education of his time, the greatest of the missionaries to China, a man capable of building bridges between two very different cultures, then we may understand how vital scientific and humanist formation are for the mission of evangelisation on the Church's most demanding and important frontiers.

Kolvenbach

Despite these upbeat views of Father Arrupe we cannot hide the fact that, for a considerable period of time, many people in the Society of Jesus thought that our schools had achieved their historical mission and that the Jesuits would do better to dedicate themselves to other forms of apostolate. This attitude was influenced by a global tendency of criticism against schools, a fall in the numbers of Jesuits, and the idea that schools were incapable of educating people in justice and the transformation of society. However Father Kolvenbach, during his long tenure as Superior General, clearly reaffirmed the importance of this apostolate within the overall framework of the Society of Jesus' mission. Thus at Arequipa in 1998 he said that "today it would be irresponsible to abandon not only the field of education, but also that of schools. From the point of view of the mission, education and schools continue to be important terrain for evangelisation. There are few other places in which there is such close and constant interaction, for so many hours a day and over so many years, between pupils, families, teachers and the community. Renouncing education would mean abandoning an important part of evangelisation and of 'new evangelisation'" (Fr Kolvenbach, *Los desafíos de la educación cristiana a las puertas del tercer milenio*, Arequipa 1998).

Father Kolvenbach dedicated specific attention to the issue of globalisation, as being the current scenario for our educational work, also in secondary schools. He highlighted the great possibilities it offers to human development, as well as its risks, which require the careful application of critical discernment, especially in

regions of the world in which the neoliberal view of economic life prevails. As Father Arrupe before him, he warned against a use of the classical criteria of quality, competence and efficiency when not moderated and guided by the spirit of Christianity.

What is important, in fact, is to ensure the development of the entire person and of all people; in other words, to look to the good of everyone and not just of the privileged, to exchange know-how and not concentrate it for the benefit of the few and the disadvantage of the many, who remain poorer not only in material goods but also in knowledge. In a world in which "knowledge is power", we must remember the importance of "knowing with" and of "knowing for". "In a world in which knowledge degenerates in limitless competition, and in which individualism and lack of solidarity create new barriers and forms of exclusion, we must reinstate the idea of knowledge for the sake of others, of knowledge and power as service, solidarity, and compassion in the full meaning of the word" (ibid.). Likewise, striving after efficiency and results must not cause us to lose sight of the reasons and the goals of science, technology, economics, and life itself. Father Kolvenbach emphasised that "the efficiency and results sought after by a Catholic school must remain within the framework of the theology and ethics of ends and means, always subordinated to the glory of God, which is the good of the human person" (ibid.). With far-sighted intuition he also spoke of an "ecology" which had to concern itself with the air we breathe in our schools, a pure and new air distinct from the contaminated atmosphere which so often surrounds and invades us: unbridled individualism, ferocious competitiveness, lack of solidarity, materialism, hedonism, insensitivity towards others and their exclusion and marginalisation, lack of ethical principles and lack of compassion (ibid.). I find this theory of an overall human ecology very interesting, and it also emerges today in the words of Pope Benedict, who invites us to care not only for the natural environment in which we live, but first and foremost for the equilibrium of people, in their relationships with others and with God. Here once again what we are seeking is integral humanism.

In the new digital communication world

Turning now to consider the state of education in recent years, we note that our mission has been increasingly marked by new communications technologies, and by the culture and mentality they have created and diffused. This is the culture in which our young people are born, grow up and live, and in which we educators accompany them on their journey. Our intention is not in any way to reject that culture, but to seek how to live within it, exploiting its positive potential and avoiding its risks. I do not, of course, have to explain this to you, who are well aware of the problems you encounter face to face every day in your young people.

I will limit myself, then, to two points which I have discussed on various occasions with a good Jesuit Father, a "guru" of the new media, a former school teacher, like you, and currently editor-in-chief of a Jesuit cultural magazine, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, Antonio Spadaro (cfr A.Spadaro, *La spiritualità dei nuovi 'barbari'*, *Civ.Catt.*, 21.7.2012).

The first point is educating people in deep and significant human relationships. The endless multiplication of contacts on the Internet can, in fact, lead to the illusion of cultivating many friendships. But in most cases all it involves are superficial relationships which never culminate in a personal exchange of life experiences, the only thing that can enrich people and help them grow. Benedict XVI raised the question in his most recent homily for Pentecost. "It is true", he said, "that we have increased our capacity to communicate, to exchange information and to transmit news, but can we say that our capacity to understand one other has increased or rather, paradoxically, that we understand one another less?" Likewise, the Pope's marvellous Message for the 2009 World Day of Social Communications focused on the theme of "relationships between people" in the world of digital communication. We must seek to move from mere "connection" or superficial communication, to the experience of "communion", authentic friendship, concrete solidarity. Young people must be made aware that the Internet, if well used, opens important possibilities for dialogue between people from different countries, cultures, religions and backgrounds, a space in which to nurture understanding and tolerance. Thus, by using the potential of the Internet, the aspect of dialogue which we mentioned earlier as being an essential part of the mission of the Society of Jesus today, can perhaps become a dimension of our educational activity. And perhaps the

construction of a "real network" of relationships among your schools may be an opportunity to transfer young people from the level of digital or virtual communication to that of more profound and complete human encounter and interaction.

One further aspect which touches us profoundly as educators is that of forming people for *interior life* in a world in which continuous (not to say obsessive) surfing on the Internet seems to make moments of reflection, contemplation and inner silence ever more rare, and thus makes it increasingly difficult to raise the most profound questions about the meaning of life. In this context it might be helpful to reflect more carefully on the "interactive" aspect of modern online communications. Indeed, it is not true that people are obliged simply to move continually from one point to another of the Internet while remaining on the surface, and that they do not have the possibility of becoming more profoundly involved.

I would like to raise two issues for our reflections on this theme. Firstly, I know a community of consecrated persons who are trying to make online resources available for young people to help them discern and reflect on questions about the meaning of their lives, on the basis of the concrete experiences and questions they have to face every day, in a highly informal and not "catechistic confessional" manner. This presupposes that people in search of themselves and of God meet on the Internet, and that a profound dialogue can be established with them. Secondly, the spirituality St. Ignatius teaches us in the Spiritual Exercises is highly "interactive", because it obliges us to involve ourselves personally in the episodes of the Gospel we examine, to interact and speak with the evangelical characters and to react with spiritual attitudes, with decisions and intentions. Being educated in this way to spiritual interactivity, and not to passive contemplation, can give rise to a form of spiritual life capable of accompanying and characterising the "life on the web" of young people today. This overcomes the negative view according to which the Internet surfer must by definition be someone who remains on the surface and is incapable of entering into the depth of things.

I hope that these considerations do not seem to stray from the point. They are intended as small glimpses of a broader picture, showing the unbroken relationship between the great objectives of the Jesuits', their spirituality (discernment and interactive spiritual quest guided by the Gospel) and our daily work as educators with the young people of our time, who are in search of themselves and of God.

Working together for the mission

Finally, I want to touch on just one more aspect of the mission of the Society of Jesus: that of working together, in collaboration, for the mission.

In truth, I do not feel I have to say very much because it is obvious that we have to work together for the mission. In Vatican Radio, where I have worked for twenty years (and which does not belong to the Society of Jesus, but which is entrusted to the Jesuits) we Jesuits number around fifteen in a total staff of 350. In your schools too, I believe, Jesuits are a small minority with respect to the total number of educators. Therefore, we are all aware that our schools exist only because we all collaborate together in a shared mission which the Jesuits cannot achieve alone. As Father General Nicolas says: the mission of the Society is too big to be carried forwards by the efforts of the Jesuits alone. He also says: "Today more than ever, as we see the horizons of the mission expand, we must - more decisively, more humbly and more joyfully - experience collaboration with others as a fundamental aspect of our way of working". And not only the Father General, but also the most authoritative body in the Society of Jesus, the most recent the General Congregation, solemnly and explicitly expressed the same conviction: "The Ignatian tradition, when expressed by a plurality of voices, - men and women, religious and laity, movements and institutions, communities and individuals - becomes more welcoming, more vigorous, more capable of enriching the Church" (CG 35, D.6, no. 23).

If we contemplate the educational mission we have been discussing until now, its importance and its beauty, then we find, I believe, that nothing therein is the exclusive property of the Jesuits, nothing cannot be shared and lived by others who feel the call.

Jesuits may be the animators and custodians of a certain spirit and a certain tradition, but this spirit and this tradition can be subsumed by others who can act with no less conviction and passion.

That means you! And I thank you for it, expressing the hope that you will be faithful and enthusiastic interpreters of a great educational tradition and vocation, for the good of the Church and of so many young people who ask for guidance as they seek the most beautiful meaning of life, and thus "give to God His greatest glory".

Thank you.