

STUDIES

IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

FIFTY YEARS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE:
REFLECTIONS ON DECREE 4 OF THE
32ND GENERAL CONGREGATION OF THE
SOCIETY OF JESUS

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57/2 AUTUMN 2025

THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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The Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality is composed of Jesuits appointed from their provinces. The seminar identifies and studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially US and Canadian Jesuits, and gathers current scholarly studies pertaining to the history and ministries of Jesuits throughout the world. It then disseminates the results through this journal.

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57/2 • AUTUMN 2025

in the beginning...

To “commemorate,” by definition, is to “celebrate in speech or writing” and “preserve in memory by some celebration” a person, place, or event.¹ In this commemorative issue of *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*, inspired and organized by one of our editorial board members, Fr. William A. McCormick (ucs), we strive, in some measure, both to “celebrate” and to “preserve,” in our hearts, the events and decrees of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus—experiences and documents that unquestionably have formed our landscape as Jesuits for now fifty years.

To this end, Fr. McCormick invited five authors to reflect on how this congregation has shaped their lives and the order since its completion on March 7, 1975. Specifically, Fr. Peter Bisson (can) shares how the congregation influenced his journey among the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. Next, Fr. David Hollenbach (uea) defines key aspects of decree 4 from that congregation and provides examples of its lasting impact. Following that, Fr. Fred Kammer (ucs) reflects on the spirit and meaning of the 32nd General Congregation in the context of further expressions of Jesuit identity and mission that developed in subsequent congregations. Then, Fr. Brian Strassburger (ucs) describes how he has taken his appropriation of the congregation to “the ground,” at the service of migrants. Finally, Fr. Martin Tripole (uea), invites us to reflect on what *justice* means in the thought of the congregation. And so, we have five men, currently serving in five different fields, reflecting on a shared legacy.

As we commemorate the GC 32, we also inaugurate here the digital format of *STUDIES* under the direction of the Institute for Advanced

¹ *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary*, ed. J. Coulson, C. T. Carr, Lucy Hutchinson, and Dorothy Eagle, illustrated edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), s.v., “commemorate.”

Jesuit Studies at Boston College. Of course, as stated earlier, the three editions—Autumn, Winter, and Spring—published online each year also will appear in print form and one copy of the printed edition will go to each Jesuit community of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States. Should readers have any comment on the this new format or its delivery, please do not hesitate to contact our editorial board, as the journal remains at your service.

Michael L. Knox, SJ
General Editor

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*Most loving Father,
who made us each in your image,
Most giving Son, who showed us the meaning of love,
Most gentle Spirit, who guides our path to fullness of life,
Guide our hearts and minds and souls and bodies to a true place
of freedom.*

*Help us to journey through life in humility,
And to share all that we have been given.
Help us to see you in each and every person,
And to be servants to all.
Help us to labor for true justice,
And to be lovers of peace.*

*O God, help us all to be free in You,
Thy kingdom come...*

1. When was I first introduced to the decrees of the 32nd General Congregation?
2. In what way do the decrees of this congregation shape my life as a Jesuit? Has this changed over the years? How and why?
3. In what ways have the decrees of this congregation remained, either implicitly or explicitly, at the heart of my apostolic life?

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Decree 4, Truth, Reconciliation, and Indigenous Relations

J. Peter Bisson, SJ

I once thought that work with Indigenous people was an example of the second Universal Apostolic Preference (UAP), walking with the excluded. Now, I see it as an example of UAP 1—showing the way to God—and being shown the way to God—in partnership with Indigenous people.

This change in my perspective came through many dark consolations of the Third Week of the Spiritual Exercises—a journey that began with decree 4 of GC 32.

In the excitement that flowed from Vatican II and more immediately from decree 4, the Jesuits in Canada founded several social justice institutions in the late 1970s and early 1980s. One was the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre, founded in 1984 in Espanola, Ontario, and built by Jesuits and Anishinabe people together, the Anishinabe being a group of related Indigenous nations in the Great Lakes region of North America. The recognition by GC 32 that social injustice prevents finding God gradually changed our understanding of the traditional “Native Missions” in Canada by helping us recognize the inherent value of Indigenous spiritualities. Furthermore, it prepared us to accept that we had contributed to colonization and its devastating impacts on Indigenous people.

The Anishinabe Spiritual Centre dedicated itself to the training of Indigenous Catholic ministers and offered a culturally appropriate gathering place for Indigenous Catholics. To these ends, it celebrated the liturgy in inculturated ways, formed Anishinabe men for service as deacons and priests, trained Anishinabe women for ministry in roles that the local diocese of Sault Sainte-Marie officially recognized as its Diocesan Order of Service, and promoted regular contact between Indigenous people and Canadian Jesuits in formation. Then, in May 30,

2025, the ownership and governance of the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre transferred from the Jesuits to Indigenous Catholics, with ecclesiastical sponsorship from the diocese and bylaws combining civil, canon, and Anishinabe law. While motivated partly by diminishing numbers of Jesuits, this transfer took an important step in the empowerment of Indigenous Catholics within the church and in the decolonization of Jesuits and our relationships with Indigenous people.

Let me relate some of how this happened. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) worked from 2008 to 2015 to receive and document the testimonies of Indigenous people who as children had attended Indian Residential Schools in Canada and to provide a safe forum for them to discuss their experiences. The goal here had to do with recognizing publicly the harmful things the children experienced and the ongoing consequences of these harms so that this acknowledgment could facilitate healing and promote reconciliation among the former students; the government of Canada, which owned the schools; and the Christian churches that managed them.

The Indian Residential Schools operated from the late nineteenth century until the 1990s, and the Jesuits ran one of them. The Canadian government had intended the schools to help consolidate the colonization of the territory by extinguishing Indigenous cultures through “re-educating” their children into “white” ways. To this end, the schools separated children from their families, communities, cultures, languages and spiritualities. The schools also provided occasions for physical and sexual abuse. In cooperating with the government by managing and staffing residential schools, the churches thus mixed evangelization with colonization. And while many church people taught sincerely, most staff shared to some degree the dominant and colonizing attitudes of much of the population.

Now, I turn to my personal story. On May 31, 2012, I began my tenure as provincial of the Jesuit province of English Canada. On that same day took place in Toronto a large, regional assembly of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Because my advisors had told me that few representatives of the Catholic Church would attend, my attendance as Jesuit provincial and a Catholic priest would carry weight. However, when I entered the downtown convention center

in my clerical suit, I realized that I had made a terrible mistake. Since my Roman collar, rather than representing peace, solidarity and reconciliation, triggered traumatic memories of the abuse that the Indigenous attendees had suffered in residential schools, those attendees seemed visibly uncomfortable with me. For this reason, I tried to “dress down” by removing the tab from my collar and taking off my jacket; but it was still obvious that I was a priest.

As such, I felt self-conscious, ashamed, and vulnerable. I also felt confused that my vocation and mission, which meant so much to me, seemed to threaten these people. To put this another way, my blind spots seemed to corrupt my holiest desires. However, although I desperately wanted to retreat to the comfort of other church people at the gathering, it felt important to associate with the Indigenous participants and experience the shame and vulnerability of the collective responsibility I shared with my Catholic ancestors for contributing to the suffering of the Indigenous people.

While I felt uncomfortable, however, I did not compare it to the disruption and violence that these people had experienced for generations. Furthermore, once I accepted my situation, I noticed that no Indigenous person treated me rudely. On the contrary, some even tried to make me feel welcome. And so, here I was, a potential trigger for traumatic memories; and some of those who had those memories were reaching out to me. My heart broke.

Here, I must point out that my ability to bear the responsibility for the damage that we had done to Indigenous people came not only from my personal spiritual resources. When allegations of Jesuit sexual abuse of Indigenous children first appeared in the late 1980s, we did not believe the victims, who then sued us. Indignant, we replied in kind, using the law as a weapon. But upon much reflection and discernment, we came to realize that we were treating old friends like enemies. Also, we started to notice patterns in the allegations, and we saw that records supported much of what we were hearing. As a result, we began to listen less judgmentally, to act less defensively, and to take the allegations more seriously. We eventually came to acknowledge the harm that our participation in the residential school system and contribution to colonization in

general had done. And as we recognized our responsibility for that harm, we also sought to compensate for it.

The change in how we listened to Indigenous people and our admission that a colonizing attitude had shaped our evangelization thus allowed me to accept the shame and confusion that I felt during my first days as provincial as I realized how I triggered traumatic memories. Subsequent changes, especially a 2015 province-wide communal discernment about our priorities, then moved us further down this path of conversion and decolonization. No surprise, then, that the first priority to emerge from this process involved Ignatian spirituality. However, the second priority to emerge—relations with Indigenous people—did surprise us. Note that this did not mean ministry *to* Indigenous people but ministry *with* Indigenous people—especially Indigenous Catholics—along with the understanding that such partnership should influence all our ministries. This new priority developed from the insight that, throughout the history of the Jesuits in Canada, we were our best selves when in right relation with Indigenous people. At the end of this exercise, an Indigenous elder, who had been working with us for forty years, said, “At last, I feel recognized. At last, I feel like a friend.

It took many humiliations for us to move from a paternalistic attitude of service to one of partnership and mutual learning. Accompanying Indigenous people despite our feelings of shame and confusion—and their accompanying us despite their frustrations and disappointments—have gotten us this far. In Ignatian terms, the persistence has been for us a long Third Week grace. In short, we could not have stayed in these relationships without admitting that we had allowed colonization to affect our evangelization. This admission, moreover, could not have happened without the critical self-awareness that came with the faith-justice commitment of GC 32 and its desire to associate with marginalized people.

Of course, the Third Week leads to the Fourth Week, and so too in our relations with Indigenous people. Indeed, facing our truth has led to the new life of our own Jesuit transformation and to finding a pathway to God. Most importantly, our transformation—the beginning of our decolonization—has allowed us to see things we could not see when preoccupied with ourselves—above all, how we and

Indigenous people can ally ourselves in a shared mission. Certainly, spirituality forms in the Indigenous culture the center of a good life and a healthy society, and Western cultures need this truth, which Indigenous people preach well. Furthermore, for Indigenous people, creation is central to true spirituality. Knowing this can help us promote integral ecological conversion and the truth that right relations with each other and with God must include right relations with creation. In this way, we are finding together a pathway to God in secularized and ecologically challenged societies.

Faith and Justice in 2025: The 50th Anniversary of the 32nd General Congregation's Decree on "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice"

David Hollenbach, SJ

Fifty years ago, in March, 1975, the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus issued its decree number 4, "Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice." The central affirmation of the decree was this: "The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement."¹ This statement echoed what the same congregation stated in its decree 2 on "Jesuits Today," which affirmed that to be a Jesuit today is "to engage, under the standard of the Cross, in the crucial struggle of our time: the struggle of faith and that struggle for justice which it includes."² A distinguished historian of Jesuit affairs who served as a delegate to this congregation, the late John W. Padberg (1926–2021), wrote, on the eve of this congregation's twentieth anniversary, that, despite the congregation's significance, we could not yet assess its full importance.³ Today, however, our ongoing experience of the congregation's impact enables us to make a compelling evaluation. Recent history also supports the contribution of

¹ GC 32, d. 4, no. 48; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (Saint Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 2009), 298.

² GC 32, d. 2, no. 12; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 291.

³ John W. Padberg, SJ, *Together as a Companionship: A History of the Thirty-First, Thirty-Second, and Thirty-Third General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (Saint Louis, MO: IJS, 1994), vii.

another distinguished Jesuit who also attended the congregation, the late Jean-Yves Calvez (1927–2010), who held that the congregation’s proclamation on faith and justice had extraordinary significance.⁴ Indeed, I think that the issuing of this decree constitutes one of the most formative events in the history of the Jesuit order.

With this background for context, I will sketch in what follows some ways in which the decree described the prevailing challenges both to faith and to justice when written fifty years ago and how these challenges have developed more recently. It then will outline some of the theological and ethical reasons for which the decree insisted that the service of faith and the promotion of justice should play a central role in the mission of Jesuits and the institutions in which they serve. Finally, it will indicate several areas in which the service of faith and promotion of justice have developed in Jesuit efforts during the past fifty years. These areas include the importance of faith and justice in Jesuit education and in other areas where Jesuits work, notably in the growth of the Jesuit Refugee Service. While my comments here surely will not give a full account of the importance of decree 4, they hopefully might enable us to mark its fiftieth anniversary with gratitude.

1. Social Analysis in Decree 4 and Today

The importance of the Jesuit mission in the service of Christian faith arises, obviously, from the fact that the Society of Jesus is rooted in its members’ relationship with Jesus Christ. All who believe are called by Christ to serve true faith by bringing the Gospel to all: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). The congregation stressed that this mission of evangelization raises deep challenges today, for “more than two billion human beings have no knowledge of God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.”⁵ The congregation also insisted, however, that many, despite their lack of explicit faith, “feel an increasing

⁴ Jean-Yves Calvez, SJ, *Faith and Justice: The Social Dimension of Evangelization* (Saint Louis, MO: IJS, 1991), 1.

⁵ GC 32, d. 4, no. 50; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 298.

hunger” for God.⁶ By helping people come to faith in Christ, Jesuits not only help increase the number of Christians in the world but also respond to the deeper longings and hopes of many who are not Christian.

The 32nd General Congregation also stressed the challenge of the decline of faith among an increasing number of persons, especially in the traditionally Christian countries of Europe and North America. Thus, the congregation echoes social thinkers who support the secularization hypothesis.⁷ This view attributes secularization to the rise of modernity, which appears in this context as an essentially nonreligious condition—an overall decline of the percentage of people who believe in God and the privatization of a religious influence restricted to interpersonal and familial relations.

However, other thinkers, such as José Casanova, a distinguished sociologist of religion, differ. Casanova argues that the data show that the percentage of the religious believers in the world is not declining and that recent decades have seen a notable deprivatization of religion.⁸ Similarly, an important survey of the role of religion worldwide conducted by the Pew Research Center affirms that the percentage of the world’s population not affiliated with any religious community will decline from 16.4% in 2010 to 13.2% in 2050 while the percentage of Christians will remain constant at 31.4%. In contrast, the decline of religion in the United States and Western Europe has increased significantly. In the US, from 2010 to 2050, the Pew study predicts that the percentage of the population with no religious faith will rise from 16% to 29% while the percentage of Christians will drop from 78% to 63%. From this perspective, the secularization hypothesis seems more valid for the US and Western Europe than for the world in general.

⁶ GC 32, d. 4, no. 50; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 298.

⁷ See, for example, Thomas Luckman, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), and Ronald F. Inglehart, *Religion’s Sudden Decline: What’s Causing It, and What Comes Next?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

⁸ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Despite these disputes, the congregation clearly got it right in pointing to the large number of people in the world today who have neither belief in God nor faith in Jesus Christ. This absence of faith in turn can lead to a lack of a sense of direction in one's personal life and to a loss of orientation in society and politics at large.⁹ On this note, Ronald Inglehart cites Scandinavian countries to indicate his hope that a broadly humanistic ethics without religion or belief in God can provide the psychological and social orientation needed. At the same time, he raises the question of whether very secular Nordic countries will remain immune from personal and social disorientation. Here, he asks whether the lack of religious faith might even tempt Sweden to fill with commitment to xenophobia and authoritarianism the gap that the decline of religion leaves.¹⁰ Indeed, the very recent rise of anti-immigrant attitudes in Scandinavian countries suggests good reason for these fears.¹¹ From this perspective, the decline of religion may have notable negative social effects. And in addition, a major international multidisciplinary study of human flourishing has suggested that regular attendance at religious services correlates with a sense of overall well-being and flourishing, which may imply that secularization has negative consequences.¹²

In any case, the 32nd General Congregation surely knew of the psychological and social disorientation that can arise from the absence of faith. On this point, it noted that lack of faith and distorted interpretations of religious traditions can lead to religious oppression and interreligious conflict.¹³ For this reason, it insisted that service to faith should be free of "every form of exploitation" and should "rec-

⁹ Inglehart, *Religion's Sudden Decline*, 17–18.

¹⁰ Inglehart, *Religion's Sudden Decline*, 144–62.

¹¹ Chris Horwood, "The Chill Factor: The Changing Politics of Immigration in Nordic Countries," Mixed Migration Centre, May 14, 2024, <https://mixedmigration.org/the-changing-politics-of-immigration-in-nordic-countries/>.

¹² Tyler J. VanderWeele et al., "The Global Flourishing Study: Study Profile and Initial Results on Flourishing," *Nature Mental Health*, April 30, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44220-025-00423-5>. For an op-ed that briefly states some of this study's conclusions, see Byron Johnson, Tyler J. VanderWeele, and Brendan Case, "The Happiest Country in the World Isn't What You Think," *New York Times*, April 30, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/30/opinion/happiness-economic-development.html>.

¹³ GC 32, d. 4, no. 75; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 304.

ognize and respect the rights of all, especially the poor and powerless.”¹⁴ The fact that religious faith can have negative as well as positive consequences for the justice and peace of society follows as an important conclusion from some major studies of the contemporary social consequences of religion.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the 32nd General Congregation did not envision the service of faith and the promotion of justice simply as side-by-side commitments in Jesuit spirituality and mission. Rather, it saw faith and justice as integrally related to each other, similar to the declaration emerging from the 1971 synod of bishops that “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.”¹⁶ Promotion of justice thus plays a constitutive role in the service of faith, just as service of authentic faith issues forth in the promotion of justice. In this view, the fact that the secularization thesis seems inaccurate today can generate some hope for Jesuits and their institutions as they seek to serve faith today.

The congregation also emphasized the reality of global poverty and the suffering it causes. On this note, decree 4 recognized the “millions of men and women suffering from poverty and hunger, from the unjust distribution of wealth and resources.”¹⁷ Furthermore, it saw this poverty as a result of the “economic, social, and political structures that dominate the life of nations and the international community.”¹⁸ The promotion of justice calls Jesuits to solidarity with these “men and women who live a life of hardship and who are victims of oppression.”¹⁹ For this reason, solidarity with the poor

¹⁴ GC 32, d. 4, no. 67; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 301.

¹⁵ See, for example, R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

¹⁶ Synod of Bishops, 1971, no. 6, in David O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 306.

¹⁷ GC 32, d. 4, no. 69; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 302.

¹⁸ GC 32, d. 4, no. 52; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 298.

¹⁹ GC 32, d. 4, no. 97; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 309.

should mark the lives of all Jesuits and their communities as well as the work of all Jesuit-affiliated institutions.²⁰

Given these realities, the task of addressing the reality of global poverty and injustice can seem massive and even overwhelming and as such will inspire little confidence that anything can be done to alleviate the problems. However, recent data offers some hope that well-directed action can make a noticeable difference. For example, World Bank data indicates a significant reduction in the number of people living in extreme poverty—that is, on less than \$2.15/day—down from 36% of the world’s people in 1990 to 9.7 % in 2020. During this period, over one billion people escaped extreme poverty, which surely provides hope that we can make a difference.²¹ Yet despite this hope, it remains clear that injustice marks even the apparent improvements. For example, almost 70 million people still live in extreme poverty and more than half of these live in sub-Saharan Africa. If current trends continue, then, 90% of those in extreme poverty will live in Africa. And despite the great wealth of the United States, severe poverty exists there as well. On this point, the Nobel Prize winning economist Angus Deaton has pointed out that the effects of poverty on human well-being can be more severe in regions of the US such as Mississippi or Appalachia than they are in Bangladesh.²²

Taking all of this into consideration, contemporary social analysis suggests grounds for hope that we can alleviate injustice as well as some reasons why that this alleviation will not come easily. Social data also suggest that faith can support human flourishing and that distorted interpretations of religious traditions can have harmful social consequences. In other words, these studies support the congregation’s mission of the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

²⁰ GC 32, d. 4, no. 97; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 309.

²¹ World Bank Group, Poverty, April 7, 2025, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>.

²² See the interview of Deaton in Annie Lowrey, “Is It Better to Be Poor in Bangladesh or the Mississippi Delta?” *Atlantic*, March 8, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/03/angus-deaton-qa/518880/>.

2. Theology and Ethics at the Link between Faith and Justice

The foregoing analysis further suggests that we can benefit from some consideration of what the congregation said about theological and ethical reflection on the link between faith and justice. This matters especially because some critics have maintained that the decree gave such strong emphasis to the promotion of justice that it unacceptably minimized the deepening of faith. For example, in 1990, at a major conference on the ministry of Jesuits in higher education, the distinguished theologian and later cardinal Avery Dulles (1918–2008) expressed a fear that the decree in effect issued a call to all Jesuits to commit themselves exclusively to social ministry. He worried, for example, that the congregation's directive would have an adverse effect on Jesuit work in higher education and could marginalize Jesuit engagement in the sciences, the classics, and the arts. In other words, Dulles felt that the promotion of justice overshadowed Jesuit commitment to explicitly faith-advancing ministries by minimizing our historic work in the arts and sciences and rejecting, implicitly, the groundedness of this work in Christ.²³

I personally responded to Fr. Dulles at the conference where he presented his objections, and readers here may find it helpful for me to restate why I found his views on the decree inadequate. My argument drew on the thought of another distinguished Jesuit theologian, Michael J. Buckley (1931–2019), who had insisted that the concern for justice aligns fully both with the service of faith and with the advancement of human well-being for which a faith-based humanism calls. In this vein, he argued that authentic Christian humanism should foster deep concern not only for great human achievements but also for the misery and suffering that mars the lives of so many in our world. Such care for those who suffer would in turn grow into a critical effort to understand how we might help alleviate their misery. In other words, it would lead to an effort to secure justice

²³ Avery Dulles, SJ, "Faith, Justice, and the Jesuit Mission," in *Assembly 1989: Jesuit Ministry in Higher Education* (Washington, D.C.: Jesuit Conference, 1990), 19, 25. For this same concern expressed in book length, see Martin R. Tripole, SJ, *Faith Beyond Justice: Widening the Perspective*, rev. ed. (Chestnut Hill, MA: IJS, 2024).

for all for whom human action or failure to act causes suffering. As Fr. Buckley put it, this “care to develop a disciplined sensitivity to human misery and exploitation, is not a single political doctrine or a system of economics. It is a humanism, a humane sensibility to be achieved anew within our own times and as a product of an education whose ideal continues to be that of the Western *humanitas*.”²⁴

For Fr. Buckley, then, a humanism inspired by Christian faith will include efforts to overcome the human suffering that injustice causes and to advance the human flourishing whose realization depends on justice in human interaction and social institutions. In this way, promotion of justice integrates the service of faith for Jesuits and indeed for all Christians, such that we can think of the Christian humanistic approach as linking faith and justice.

But perhaps the strongest indication that the decree commits itself firmly to the importance of faith appears in its citation of a passage from the Jesuit *Constitutions* where St. Ignatius states that “the means which unite the human instrument with God . . . are more effective than those which equip it in relation to men.”²⁵ Apparently, then, St. Ignatius and, following him, the 32nd General Congregation strongly affirm that all Jesuit ministry, including the ministries that promote justice, requires union with God. The vision of Christian humanism that in Fr. Buckley’s view includes commitment to find ways of aiding people who are suffering thus presents a humanism unambiguously grounded in God. To put this another way, faith in God relates reciprocally to working for justice.

This Christian humanism finds theological support in the conviction that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God—a faith-based claim with scriptural foundations (Gn 1:27). In

²⁴ Michael J. Buckley, “The University and the Concern for Justice: The Search for a New Humanism, *Thought* 57 (June, 1982): 223; “Christian Humanism and Human Misery: A Challenge to the Jesuit University,” in Francis M. Lazarus, ed., *Faith, Discovery, Service: Perspectives on Jesuit Education*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1992), 77–105; *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1998), 105–28.

²⁵ GC 32, d. 4, no. 61; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 299.

addition, it relies on the belief that the promotion of justice flows from the liberation and reconciliation that Christ brought. For these theological reasons, there can be no promotion of justice apart from the gifts that God gives to humanity through the grace of Christ. In the decree's words, "The injustice that racks our world in so many forms is, in fact, a denial of God in practice, for it denies the dignity of the human person, the image of God, the brother or sister of Christ."²⁶

From a secular perspective, the congregation's vision finds also support in Immanuel Kant's argument that the inherent dignity of all human persons means that they ought to be treated as ends in themselves and never as means to other goals.²⁷ Following this logic, one cannot communicate the Gospel effectively without the promotion of a goal that to some may seem quite secular—namely, the goal of justice. The congregation thus envisioned humanistic ends as both deeply Christian and very much of this world—simultaneously both religious and secular—drawing simultaneously on both faith and reason in a very Catholic way in its contribution to Jesuit ministry.

Other critics of the decree have observed that it does not define the justice that it sees as central to the Jesuit mission. Yet while the decree does not offer any formal definition of *justice*, it says much about its key elements. Specifically, the congregation's emphasis on the way justice requires special concern for the poor and marginalized resembles what the US Catholic bishops, in their 1986 pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All*, called "basic justice."²⁸ Of course, the concept of justice has many facets and as such has fallen subject to intense debate from classical times.²⁹ The US Bishops sought to address this complexity by proposing

²⁶ GC 32, d. 4, no. 78; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 305.

²⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960), 47.

²⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the US Economy* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986), no. 77, <https://www.usccb.org/resources/economicjusticeforall>.

²⁹ On the complexity of justice, see Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009). I have treated the meaning of *justice* from a Catholic standpoint in "Modern Catholic Teachings Concerning Justice,"

an understanding of “basic justice” as the moral norm that “demands the establishment of minimum levels of participation in the life of the human community for all persons.”³⁰ Conversely, they described ultimate injustice as a situation that excludes a person or group of people from social participation. This emphasis on basic levels of inclusion and participation in social life as required by justice appears throughout the decree, which regards social exclusion or marginalization as a sign of injustice toward the poor and other excluded groups.

To expand on these points, the call of justice to overcome exclusion also finds theological grounding in the duty of Christians to show love toward all their fellow humans, given that the creation of community requires love. Furthermore, the overcoming of exclusion receives secular support from the understanding of human beings as essentially social. From this perspective, both Christians and non-Christians can share the conviction that no person can thrive on his or her own—a conviction that calls Jesuits, Jesuit-sponsored institutions, and the entire human community to work to overcome forms of marginalization and exclusion that cause poverty and oppression.³¹ Finally, overcoming exclusion calls all people to work to enable the poor and marginalized to achieve greater dignity through fuller participation in social, economic, and political life.

On these bases, the decree explicitly invites Jesuits into “solidarity with the poor.”³² Though it does not use the phrase “preferential option for the poor” that both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have strongly endorsed, the decree’s call for solidarity clearly supports this option. In addition, it affirms that Jesuit vows respond to the Gospel’s call to build a community based on sharing rather than greed and on

in John C. Haughey, ed., *The Faith that Does Justice: Examining Christian Sources for Social Change* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 207–31. This volume intended to clarify the theological dimensions of the decree whose anniversary this essay commemorates.

³⁰ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 77.

³¹ For the importance of social participation as essential to justice and human dignity, see my *Human Rights in a Divided World: Catholicism as a Living Tradition* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2024), 46–62.

³² GC 32, d. 4, nos. 65, 69, 96–99; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 300, 302, 309–10.

service rather than the exclusion that results from domination or exploitation. Here, too, we find an explicit recognition that faith in the redeeming power of Christ's cross invites us to share the struggles of the suffering. In this sense, both faith and justice call for Jesuit commitment in all their ministries to address the realities of poverty and exploitation.

Of course, such commitment will take different forms in different ministries—sometimes as direct work with and for the poor, at other times through efforts to change the social institutions that lead to unjust poverty, and in other contexts through affective and communal support of those engaged with more direct service. The decree insists, however, that justice for the poor and marginalized should engage all Jesuits and Jesuit-sponsored institutions. On this point, it states that the commitment to justice by Jesuits and their institutions, especially justice for those excluded from basic levels of participation, should be total, corporate, rooted in faith and experience, and multiform.³³ While this agenda surely may seem daunting, the decree provides religious and ethical resources that can inspire efforts to respond to the challenge today.

Note, too, that subsequent general congregations have affirmed strongly the 32nd General Congregation's commitment of the Society of Jesus to the faith and justice agenda. For example, the 33rd General Congregation (1983) acknowledged that the implementation of decree 4 had not happened without difficulties. Quoting the Society's general superior, Fr. Pedro Arrupe (1907–1991), the congregation confessed that Jesuit readings of the previous congregation had sometimes seemed "incomplete, slanted and unbalanced," perhaps due in part to how some Jesuits had come to see the justice call in a way the minimized the mission to serve faith. But the text of the congregation's decree suggests that the tendencies to an inadequate approach to implementation had come about even more from the dangers of a "discarnate spiritualism" that failed to recognize that the call to promote justice is "the embodiment of God's love and saving mercy."³⁴ And while some Jesuits in Spain and elsewhere had resisted the mission, the 33rd General Congregation strongly reaffirmed the preceding congregation's decree when it called

³³ GC 32, d. 4, nos. 53–55; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 298–99.

³⁴ GC 33, d. 1, nos. 35–36; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 448–49.

the Society to an “integration of the service of faith and the promotion of justice in one single mission” and to a recognition of “the universality of this mission in the various ministries in which we engage.”³⁵

Note, too, that the 34th General Congregation (1995) insisted even more strongly on the centrality of both faith and justice to the Jesuit mission. On this point, it declared that “there is no service of faith without promotion of justice” and “no promotion of justice without communicating faith.”³⁶ This congregation also saw the promotion of justice as rooted in the original charism of St. Ignatius that had led to the founding of the Jesuit order, noting how the Jesuit who served as secretary to St. Ignatius, Fr. Juan Alfonso de Polanco (1517–1576), wrote under Ignatius’s guidance that “so great are the poor in the sight of God that it was especially for them that Jesus Christ was sent into the world.”³⁷ It thus should come as no surprise that the 34th General Congregation devoted decree 3 entirely to the mission for justice, given that it had seen the good effects of the earlier calls to work for justice in Jesuit life, including new friendships with poor people and with those who work to overcome injustice. Indeed, the faith of the poor has touched many Jesuits whom their hope has renewed and their love has transformed.³⁸

The congregation went on to stress several additional dimensions of ministry that experience has shown indispensable to the advancement of both faith and justice. These include adaptation of the Christian message for better reception in non-Western cultures—what we call *inculturation*—and engagement of faith with religious traditions other than Christianity—what we call *interreligious dialogue*. In summary, the congregation deepened and broadened GC 32’s proclamation that all Jesuit ministry should serve faith and promote justice.

³⁵ GC 33, d. 1, no. 41; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 451.

³⁶ GC 34, d. 2, no. 46; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 529.

³⁷ GC 34, d. 2, no. 33; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 525.

³⁸ GC 34, d. 3, no. 50; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 530.

3. Response to Some Urgent Issues Today

Since its publication fifty years ago, decree 4 of the 32nd General Congregation has shaped the work of the Society of Jesus. In this section, I will highlight just a few of the ways it has done so, in hope that these examples will illustrate the continuing importance of the decree today.

Given that most people probably know the Society best from its work in education, I will begin by highlighting a few ways in which the commitment to faith and justice has had an impact in that sector. On the feast of St. Ignatius in 1973, when the Jesuit general Fr. Pedro Arrupe addressed the alumni of Jesuit schools in Europe, he acknowledged that these institutions had not done an adequate job educating their students for their roles “in the promotion of justice and the liberation of the oppressed.”³⁹ At that moment, Fr. Arrupe called Jesuit schools and universities to recognize that “the paramount objective of Jesuit education” should involve the formation of its graduates as “men [and women] for others” who give themselves to the service others in the promotion of justice.⁴⁰ In 2000, Fr. Arrupe’s successor, Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach (1928–2016), repeated this call to Jesuit educators at Santa Clara University when he exhorted Jesuit universities to develop new ways to address the challenges to faith and the scandalous injustices of our world in a “university way.”⁴¹

Subsequent Jesuit generals have renewed this call: Fr. Adolfo Nicolás (1936–2020) in Mexico City in 2010 at a conference on Jesuit higher education in the context of globalization, and Arturo Sosa on many other occasions. Likewise, the theme appeared as a central priority in the universal apostolic preferences that the Society presented

³⁹ Pedro Arrupe, “Men for Others: Training Agents of Change for the Promotion of Justice—Address to the International Congress of Jesuit Alumni of Europe, Valencia, Spain, July 31, 1973,” in Pedro Arrupe, *Justice with Faith Today: Selected Letters and Addresses II*, ed. Jerome Aixala (Saint Louis: IJS, 1980), 124.

⁴⁰ Pedro Arrupe, “Men for Others,” 123–38.

⁴¹ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, “The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education,” *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 31, no. 1 (January 2001): 13–28, at 28.

in 2019 to shape all its ministries.⁴² These priorities have played a central role in the assemblies on justice in Jesuit higher education that have taken place regularly at Jesuit institutions of higher education in the United States—Santa Clara University (2000), Loyola University Chicago (2003), John Carroll University (2005), Creighton University (2013), Seattle University (2017), Georgetown University (2021), and again at Loyola Chicago (2024).

The universal application of these orientations appears in that the service of faith and the promotion of justice also play a central role in Jesuit secondary education. The Jesuit Schools Network (JSN), based chiefly in the US, has developed frameworks to enhance secondary education that promote a deepening of faith and a greater commitment to justice among its students.⁴³ And these frameworks in turn have developed from collaboration with Jesuit educators more globally. For example, the *Fe y Alegría* network of primary and secondary schools that began as a Jesuit initiative in Latin America has since expanded to other parts of the world where popular education addresses a basic need among the poor. While this network began before the 32nd General Congregation and is not run under the auspices of the Society, the Jesuits promote this work in collaboration with others who have committed themselves to the construction of a more humane and just world. Today, the JSN reaches over 750,000 students through 30,000 teachers in 22 countries.⁴⁴ As such, this remarkable range of educational service for the poor offers a prime example of what the 32nd General Congregation envisioned when it advocated the promotion of justice in Jesuit-related work.

A further international emphasis on justice in Jesuit education came in 2018 with the founding of the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU) to foster collaboration in the apostolates of teaching

⁴² See Jesuits, *Universal Apostolic Preferences*, <https://www.jesuits.global/uap/introduction/>.

⁴³ Jesuit Schools Network, “Ignatian Frameworks,” <https://jesuitschoolsnetwork.org/resources/frameworks/>.

⁴⁴ *Fe y Alegría*, “Popular Education,” [https://www.feyalegria.org/la-educacion-popular-es-nuestro-camino/#](https://www.feyalegria.org/la-educacion-popular-es-nuestro-camino/#;); “Fe y Alegría in Figures,” <https://www.feyalegria.org/>.

and research among its member institutions around the world. Its goals include the expansion of access to higher education for the disadvantaged; the promotion, guided by Catholic social teaching, of the education of civic and political leaders; and the teaching and advocacy of economic and environmental justice.⁴⁵ From this perspective, we can see the IAJU as a development of the commitment to faith and justice that the Society made fifty years ago and that illustrates how this commitment continues to help shape Jesuit ministry.

This investment in faith and justice has appeared as well in a range of other sectors, including the establishment of centers devoted to research and advocacy on issues related to both faith and justice. To cite just one example, the Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection (JCTR) in Lusaka, Zambia, began in 1988 to serve faith and promote justice in Zambia, in the African continent more widely, and in the world in general.⁴⁶ As such, the JCTR has accomplished much, perhaps most notably in the key role it has played in addressing, in the Jubilee 2000 campaign, the economic crises that many of the world's poorest countries have faced due financial debts to the global north.⁴⁷

But perhaps the most significant Jesuit initiative for the promotion of justice over the past fifty years has involved the founding of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) by Fr. Arrupe in 1980. When the US military conflict in Vietnam ended in 1975, large numbers of Vietnamese fled their homes in small boats launched into the South China Sea. Many did not survive, and additional conflicts in Southeast Asia drove many more people from their homes. In response, Fr. Arrupe invited Jesuits from around the world to come to the assistance of these displaced people in Southeast Asia. This response in turn led to the development of the JRS—an agency small in size, compared to some major humanitarian organizations, but that, in 2023, was serving over a million displaced

⁴⁵ International Association of Jesuit Universities, "Our Priorities," <https://iaju.org/>.

⁴⁶ Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection, <https://jctr.org.zm/en/>.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth A. Donnelly, "Making the Case for Jubilee: The Catholic Church and the Poor-Country Debt Movement," *Ethics and International Affairs* 21, no. 1 (March 2007), 107–33.

people in over 50 countries.⁴⁸ Of course, this initiative represents a modest contribution facing the magnitude of the forced displacement taking place today where, in June of 2024, over 120 million people worldwide have left their homes against their will.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, it represents a significant response to the general congregation's call to justice.

4. Conclusion

I hope this short essay has revealed that GC 32's invitation to Jesuits to see their ministry as the service of faith and the promotion of justice has made a real difference in the world. In addition, I hope it shows that the decline of faith in some parts of the world points out the importance of the Jesuit commitment to spreading the Gospel and calling people to belief. On this note, the fact that secularization has not spread as extensively as some social thinkers maintain can lead to renewed confidence that Jesuit efforts to preach the faith can make a positive difference. Likewise, the oppression and poverty of today's world indicate that the Jesuit commitment to promoting justice matters deeply, while the fact that radical poverty has notably declined shows that we can make progress in practical justice. Surely, Jesuits engaged in education have taken notable steps to advance both faith and justice through their schools and universities as have those working in more direct forms of social ministry, including the JRS. Overall, therefore, we can claim with confidence that the general congregation of 50 years ago launched the Society of Jesus and its members on an important and productive path that we can trust will continue to bear fruit.

⁴⁸ Jesuit Refugee Service, *Annual Report 2023*, p. 9, https://jrs.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/JRS_annual-report-2023_Eng_compressed.pdf.

⁴⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Figures at a Glance," <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/figures-glance>.

Fifty Years of the Faith-Justice Mission

Fred Kammer, SJ

Since I entered the New Orleans Province in 1963, I have seen significant development in our appropriation of the faith-that-does-justice mission of GC 32. At the time of my entrance, our province social apostolate had three components. First, a few Jesuits worked in the tradition of the “labor priests,” including Fr. Louis J. Twomey (1905–1969) of the Institute of Labor Relations at Loyola University.¹ Second, parishes served the Hispanic poor in El Paso, San Antonio, and Miami and the African American poor at Christ the King Parish in Grand Coteau and its rural Bellevue Mission. Third, in addition to our mission in Sri Lanka, we responded to the 1960s call from Pope Paul VI to commit men to Latin America, sending them to Brazil and Paraguay.

In 1975, when the 32nd General Congregation occurred, I was studying theology in Chicago. I greeted GC 32 as an affirmation of directions superiors had set out by sending me to law school and my regency with the Atlanta Legal Aid Society. I also saw the congregation as mandating new directions for the entire Society. I considered it a Jesuit appropriation of directions firmly established by Vatican II, especially in *Gaudium et spes* and the Synod of Bishops of 1971, the latter of which is often summarized, “Action for justice [is] a constitutive element of the preaching of the gospel.”²

The church saw that worldwide injustice denied not only human dignity but also the very existence of the God who loves all people.

¹ Fr. Twomey assisted Fr. General Pedro Arrupe (1907–1991) in drafting his 1967 letter on the interracial apostolate, https://jesuitportal.bc.edu/research/documents/1967_arrupeinterracial/.

² Synod of Bishops, *Justitia in Mundo* (1971), §§1–6, <https://christusliberat.org/journal/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Justicia-in-Mundo.pdf>.

This practical atheism was not just person-to-person but structured into social, economic, and political systems. The Gospel then must have, as constitutive parts, denouncing unjust structures, as did the prophets and Jesus, and announcing more just and life-giving ways of living together as children of a loving God.³

Reading the same “signs of the times,” the mandate of GC 32 to serve faith and promote justice seemed to me to pivot around three poles: the mission of faith doing justice; the reality of social structures; and the call to solidarity.⁴ I concluded that we Jesuits and our colleagues, in solidarity with oppressed peoples, must address individual injustices and systems that allow or enforce structural evils. In this spirit, my ordination invitation in 1976 included these words from GC 32: “today the Jesuit is a man whose mission is to dedicate himself entirely to the service of faith and the promotion of justice.”⁵ In the decades following, I closely followed the evolution of this mission and how subsequent congregations treated it.

In retrospect, I see that GC 32 launched us into what GC 33 (1983) called “an experience of grace and conversion,” persecution for Christ’s kingdom—sixty-four Jesuits now have been martyred since the Synod of 1971—difficulty in understanding “the Church’s recent emphasis on changing the structures of society,” and “tensions both in the Society and outside it.”⁶ My experience confirmed the polarization described by GC 33 and the inability of most people to understand social structures. Nevertheless, GC 33 confirmed the faith-justice mission.

³ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church’s Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests* (1988), §14, <https://www.humandevelopment.va/en/risorse/archivio/dottrina-sociale-della-chiesa/orientamenti-per-lo-studio-della-dottrina-sociale-della-chiesa-n.html>.

⁴ GC 32, d. 2, no. 2; d. 4, nos. 6, 48; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 2009), 291, 298, 309.

⁵ GC 32, d. 2, no. 31; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 296.

⁶ GC 33, d. 1, nos. 31–33; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 448–49.

It took me some time to understand the new directions from General Congregation 34 (1995), since it seemed to water down the strong pairing of faith and justice from GC 32. From GC 34, we learned that this mission includes two complementary dimensions, the first involving faith and culture. On this point, we saw, in the twenty years between GC 32 and GC 34, that social and economic injustices are woven deeply within cultures. In our country, for example, cultural myths of rugged individualism, manifest destiny, white racial superiority, and economic self-sufficiency are so deep-seated that they deafen many people to the Gospel call to community, stewardship, solidarity, and a special care for the *anawim*—the “poor of God.” Here, Pope Saint John Paul II diagnosed the diabolical cultural role of the “desire for profit” and “thirst for power” in our worldwide economy and called us to a thorough conversion.⁷ In this, I had misunderstood how culture promotes injustice; or rather, how justice misses its subtle but profound role in preaching the Gospel and building the reign of God.

The second complementary pair has to do with faith and religious dialogue. Certainly, GC 34 required commitment to interreligious dialogue. On this point, given that the transcendent plays a central role in most cultures, transforming culture to pursue justice requires attention to religion. With Christians fewer than twenty percent of the world’s population, the congregation wrote that “our commitment to justice and peace, human rights, and the protection of the environment has to be made in collaboration with believers of other religions.”⁸ Our experiences of terrorism and inter-religious conflicts also underscored religion’s critical role in world affairs and the duty to bridge religious divides.

For GC 34, then, working for justice “cannot be achieved without, at the same time, attending to the cultural dimensions of social life and the way in which a culture defines itself regarding religious transcendence.”⁹ This led me to speak not simply of changing economic

⁷ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (December 30, 1987), §37, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html.

⁸ GC 34, d. 5, no. 8; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 550.

⁹ GC 34, d. 2, no. 18; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 529.

and social structures, in the abstract, but also of transforming the economic, political, social, cultural, educational, and religious structures and dimensions of particular societies.

Later, as provincial of the New Orleans Province, I attended General Congregation 35 (2008) and sat on the drafting committee for the decree “Challenges to Our Mission Today.” GC 35 enriched our commitment to faith and justice with a triple reconciliation. Drawing on the image of Jesus as the bringer of jubilee—“a year of favor” (Lk 4)—and echoing the call for unity rooted in Leviticus, the congregation challenged us to promote reconciliation with God, among ourselves, and with creation.¹⁰

In this same vein, General Congregation 36 (2016) urged a “mission of reconciliation and justice.”¹¹ Here, the congregation developed the triple reconciliation from GC 35, enriched by the 2014 letter on reconciliation from Father General Adolfo Nicolás (1936–2020) and the teaching of Pope Francis “placing faith, justice, and solidarity with the poor and the excluded as central elements of the mission of reconciliation,” and calling us to “hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”¹² The congregation urged us to change lifestyles, to accompany the most vulnerable, and to analyze rigorously the causes and cures for the environmental and social crisis.

The strengths of the responses from US Jesuits and their colleagues to our faith-justice mission are clear to me: repeated calls for greater commitments on the part of all Jesuits and ministries; acceptance of formation for justice for Jesuits themselves and for our students; widespread student immersion experiences; the service and justice commitments of the Jesuit Schools Network of North America, Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, Jesuit Volunteers, Ignatian Volunteers, and Ignatian Solidarity

¹⁰ Lv 16:29–34; 19: 18, 34; 23:26–32; 25:1–7; GC 35, d3, no. 12; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 746.

¹¹ GC 36, d. 1; https://jesuits.eu/images/docs/GC_36_Documents.pdf.

¹² GC 36, d. 1, no. 3; https://jesuits.eu/images/docs/GC_36_Documents.pdf; Francis, *Laudato Si'* (2015), §49, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

Network; university social justice institutes doing social analysis and theological reflection; institutionalization of justice, reconciliation, and ecology at the province offices; and the establishment of Nativity and Cristo Rey-model schools.

On the downside, despite good commitment to immersion for students, many institutions still struggle to implement consistent social analysis and theological reflection. On this note, the number of small communities of Jesuits living among the marginalized has declined sharply. And although our Jesuit communities in the US have more simple lifestyles than fifty years ago, US Jesuits after formation still live largely as upper-middle class families who can afford housekeepers. Furthermore, some social centers have closed and others no longer have Jesuits on staff, while only lay colleagues serve as provincial assistants for social ministries. In addition, many Jesuits seem not to know how to integrate the faith-justice mandate into their preaching, teaching, giving of the Spiritual Exercises, and other works, and most still do not seem to understand how systems and structures shape our ability to love, serve, and preach the Gospel, while others simply resist the mandate of GC 32.

In his course on Vatican II at the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago, Fr. Ted Ross (1934–2024) told us that it “takes a hundred years to implement a council.” That is likely the same interval for us to deeply understand, take to heart, and implement the mission of GC 32 across the full span of our ministries and communities. My generation has to trust that newer generations of Jesuits and colleagues will work to strengthen what has worked and to change what the Holy Spirit, through the directions of GC 32 and its successors, still needs to infuse.

Insights on GC 32 Decree 4 from Migrant Accompaniment on the US-Mexico Border

Brian A. Strassburger, SJ

My vocation surfaced most profoundly during a volunteer year I spent in Durban, South Africa working at an AIDS hospice, elementary school, and boys home. It was a powerful formation in the promotion of justice.

Later, as a Jesuit novice reading decree 4 of General Congregation 32, I was immediately inspired by the opening salvo: “the mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of the faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement.”¹ Reading how we as Jesuits must “recognize and respect the rights of all, especially the poor and the powerless, but also to work actively to secure those rights. . . . The promotion of justice is an integral part of the priestly service of the faith,” I could not help but think of the life-saving impact of access to antiretroviral treatment for AIDS patients.² My entrance into the Society was not an end to my work for justice but a new and exciting opportunity.

A decade later, I was ordained a priest in June of 2021. For my first mission after ordination, I was sent to the diocese of Brownsville, Texas to respond to local pastoral needs. It was an opportunity to put this call into direct action, and that is exactly what we worked to do.

¹ GC 36, d. 4, no. 48; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 2009), 298.

² GC 35, d. 4, no. 67; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 301.

We formalized our mission as Del Camino Jesuit Border Ministries, with a focus on providing sacramental ministry and pastoral care to the migrant population on both sides of the Mexico–United States border. Principally, this means that we visit migrant camps and shelters to celebrate Mass and accompany the people. There, we have encountered an acute need for spiritual care among an extremely vulnerable population that has suffered tremendously, from robberies and extortion to kidnappings and physical and sexual violence. I have found it such an emotionally moving experience to gather in a shelter or camp, often just setting up our portable Mass kit on a folding table as an altar, to celebrate the Eucharist with the wounded migrants we encounter.

Perhaps the most valuable lesson that I have learned in the four years I have spent on the border involves how the service of faith to the most vulnerable itself represents an act of promoting justice. Our priestly charism calls us to sacramental ministry, and often the poor and vulnerable themselves experience the greatest limitations in their access to the sacraments. Pope Francis summarizes this best when he writes: “I want to say, with regret, that the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. . . . Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care.”³

These words of the late Pope Francis inspire me greatly in our ministry on the border as I think about the depth of faith in the migrants I encounter and how meaningful I have found offering the sacraments in the context of a migrant camp or shelter. Of course, the lament of Pope Francis over the lack of spiritual care for the poor can resonate in any area of Jesuit ministry: parishes where non-English speaking groups feel like second class citizens, Catholic schools where the poor cannot afford to attend or encounter a culture where they struggle to fit in, or retreat centers where the poor find themselves limited by financial or opportunity costs to attend retreats. In the face of these realities, we must continue to look in all our Jesuit ministries for ways to offer privileged and preferential religious care to the poor and vulnerable.

³ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013) § 200, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

In fact, our ability to offer religious care can set us apart from non-religious actors also working for justice. We learned this lesson early on in our ministry at the border. When Fr. Louie Hotop (ucs) and I began visiting a new migrant camp in the plaza of Reynosa, Mexico in 2021, we immediately encountered the acute humanitarian needs, because these needs always appear the most obvious and evident. As we met non-governmental organizations providing similar aid, however, we reflected more on what we uniquely could offer, and so we decided to celebrate Mass. It started small, with just a few people we had invited to join; but within months, an entire community of faith had formed, including designated lectors and a guitar-led choir. In March 2022, we even held listening sessions with the migrant community in the plaza to participate in the synod on synodality. Francis, an asylum seeker from El Salvador, shared that, “When we arrived here on the border, we were hopeless, and honestly not sure what we would do—go back or give up—but the Church was here. The Eucharist strengthens us and gives life to us.” His wife Deysi added, “When we started participating in Mass, it awoke something that was dead inside of me. It gave me the strength to keep going.”

The testimonies of Francis and Deysi indicate that the service of faith to the most vulnerable itself stands as an act of justice. Moreover, as we have seen in our ministry, while the promotion of justice can begin with the service of faith and access to the sacraments, it should not end there. When we put ourselves at the service of faith with the most vulnerable, we lose that insulation from the poor that GC 32 laments.⁴ And when we drop our insulation and find ourselves in regular close contact with the poor, we grow in solidarity and feel compelled to promote justice. For example, when we see the suffering of migrants on the border, as in a woman eight months pregnant with anemia sleeping on the ground in a tent, we do not limit our ministry to celebrating Mass at the shelter and waving goodbye. Instead, we start contacting local authorities to find a way to get adequate prenatal and birthing care as soon as possible. In other words, we see the urgent need and find ourselves moved to act. And while policies may prevent

⁴ GC 35, d. 4, nos. 97–98; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 309.

our advocacy efforts from bearing fruit, we remain committed to the promotion of justice through these initiatives.

Furthermore, these experiences evangelize us as Jesuits. Moments after Chief Justice Roberts swore Donald Trump into office, the border closed to asylum seekers, including people we knew who had appointments scheduled to enter the country legally. The very next day, we visited people in shelters in Reynosa, most of whom had had their appointments canceled. After Mass, we asked people to share how they felt. They responded: “Devastated.” “Heartbroken.” “Terrified.” One woman, Sandra, raised her hand from the back of the room. “*La esperanza es lo último que se pierde*” — “Hope is the last thing we lose.” She spoke these words despite the fact that she had waited over seven months to get an appointment, and now the government had canceled it.

Sandra, like so many migrants we encounter, clearly turns to her faith as a source of strength and hope. As such, she does not place her hope in a smartphone app that schedules appointments or in a politician and political party. Instead, she places her hope in Jesus Christ. As such, her faith itself evangelizes. For example, Sandra’s words remind me that, amid the despair, we should not let fear win: we must hold onto hope, because the Lord does not abandon us. Indeed, Jesus came to free us from sin and death, to accompany us in our own passion, and to offer us eternal life with him. I can think of no greater act for the promotion of justice.

And so, the words of decree 4 continue to resound in our world today. As such, I hope and pray that as members of the Society we continue to live out this call and remain rooted in our service of the faith and the promotion of justice, marked by a particular closeness with the poor and vulnerable. For when we draw near to the poor and remove the insulation that shields us from their reality, we find a warm and eager welcome to gather in prayer and in the celebration of the sacraments. Indeed, we see on the faces of those gathered around us the reality that the service of faith is itself the promotion of justice, and closeness to the poor evangelizes us and further compels our efforts for justice.

What Is the Jesuit Mission?: Faith/ Justice and Later Reformulations of the Mission of the Society of Jesus

Martin R. Tripole, SJ

Arguably the most disputed question in recent Jesuit history concerns how the Society of Jesus understands its mission today. This essay considers three different understandings of that mission, as follows:

- In 1975, the 32nd General Congregation officially decreed that “the mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement.”¹
- Twenty years later, GC 34 (1995) decreed the mission as “to serve faith and promote the justice of God’s Kingdom” and affirmed its support for faith/justice as only one of many Jesuit apostolates.²
- In a talk that he delivered in Rome in 1981, Fr. General Pedro Arrupe (1907–1991) offered an unofficial statement of the mission as the service of faith through the promotion of a life of justice and love.³

In what follows, I will examine each understanding in turn.

¹ GC 32, d. 4, no. 2; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources [IJS], 2009), 298.

² GC 34, d. 2, no. 11; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 526. In this essay, I follow the usage common among Jesuits of the form *faith/justice* to refer to decree 4 of GC 32.

³ Pedro Arrupe, “Rooted and Grounded in Love,” in *The Spiritual Legacy of Pedro Arrupe, SJ* (Rome: Jesuit Committee on Province Planning, 1985), 145–95.

I. GC 32's Understanding of the Jesuit Mission

In 1975, the Society published the decrees of GC 32. We focus here on the congregation's two most celebrated and controversial decrees regarding the nature of the Jesuit mission: decree 4, "Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice," and its allied document, decree 2, "Jesuits Today."⁴

The superior general at the time, Fr. Arrupe, saw the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) as making an urgent call for the Society to return to the spirit of its founding father, St. Ignatius of Loyola, and to direct the apostolic activities of the Society to address the social and economic injustices and marginalization felt acutely in many parts of the world. In doing so, he hoped also to revitalize the spirit of the Society, who had lost membership at a rapid pace since its apogee in the mid-1960s.

GC 32's primary affirmation appears in decree 4, which states the nature of the Jesuit mission in a new and comprehensive way: "The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement."⁵

The document conveys its tone by emphasizing justice over faith, though it certainly discusses faith as well. Furthermore, the document attends primarily to the understanding of "justice" rather than "faith," as here:

For us, the promotion of justice is not [to be understood as] one apostolic area among others, the "social apostolate"; rather, it should be the concern of our whole life and a dimension of all our apostolic endeavors.⁶

Note the extraordinary prominence that the congregation affords the promotion of justice, placing promotion of justice on a par in the Jesuit

⁴ GC 32, d. 2, 4; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 291–316.

⁵ GC 32, d. 4, no. 2; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 298.

⁶ GC 32, d. 4, no. 47; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 309.

apostolate with the proclamation of “the faith” and with leading others to a “personal encounter with Christ.”⁷

A. Depth and Breadth of Decree 4

And so, what does decree 4 mean by declaring that the promotion of justice “should be the concern of our whole life”? Decree 2 clarifies the depth and breadth of the concern:

Moreover, the service of faith and the promotion of justice cannot be for us simply one ministry among others. It must be the integrating factor of all our ministries; and not only of our ministries but of our inner life as individuals, as communities, and as a worldwide brotherhood. This is what our Congregation means by a decisive choice. It is the choice that underlies and determines all the other choices embodied in its declarations and directives.⁸

Note here that, while the congregation focused its attention on the role of “justice,” it did not provide definitions of the terms “faith” and “justice”—nor, in fact, has a definition of either term appeared in any subsequent congregational document. Nevertheless, the document seems to imply an understanding of faith as primarily Catholic or Christian while indicating that the congregation aims at promoting social—as opposed, for example, to distributive or restorative—justice. This bears out, for example, in decree 1 of GC 33 (1983), which, when speaking of “our service of faith and promotion of justice,” states that “we have not always recognized that the social justice we are called to is part of that justice of the Gospel which is the embodiment of God’s love and saving mercy.”⁹

Note too that, by insisting that the service of faith and the promotion of justice “must” reach into the “inner life” of Jesuits, decree 2 seems to indicate that the meaning of the expression “the concern of our whole life” should go beyond a Jesuit’s apostolic activity to include his

⁷ GC 32, d. 4, no. 51; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 310.

⁸ GC 32, d. 2, no. 9; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 292. I interpret “integrating” here to mean the encompassing or unifying factor.

⁹ GC 33, d. 1, nos. 31–32; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 448.

deepest thoughts and values. As such, the decree implies that the faith/justice principle should touch if not transform a Jesuit's very existence.

B. Problems Following from Decree 4

With this context, I turn now to argue, in this section, that two significant problems follow from decree 4.

1. The Limitation of Apostolates

GC 32's decree that the promotion of justice constitutes "an absolute requirement" of the service of faith implies that no Jesuit may undertake any mission that does not involve the promotion of justice in some way.¹⁰ This leads us to an examination of the neuralgic issue regarding the decree—to wit, should we think of the promotion of justice as "an absolute requirement" of the service of faith, or would another formulation better suit the congregation's understanding? Jesuit and non-Jesuit circles alike for years have contested the "absolute requirement" clause, and I discuss the issue at length in the revised edition of *Faith Beyond Justice*.¹¹ For example, I there present Jesuit theologian Avery Cardinal Dulles (1918–2008) as one of the first to argue for understanding the promotion of justice as "an integral part" of the service of faith when we understand the Christian faith in its totality, but not as "essential to [its] existence."¹²

With these considerations in mind, one can understand how, al-

¹⁰ GC 32, d. 4, no. 2; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 298. Before writing my first edition of *Faith Beyond Justice*, I raised this issue by asking some members of the Jesuit curia, in Rome, if, given the faith/justice mandate, a Jesuit's superiors may allow him to teach mathematics and, if so, how to understand that assignment as the service of faith through the promotion of justice. One Jesuit responded that, as provincial, he would not assign such an undertaking to a Jesuit. See Martin R. Tripole, SJ, *Faith Beyond Justice: Widening the Perspective*, rev. ed. (Boston College, MA: IJS, 2024), 31.

¹¹ Tripole, *Faith Beyond Justice*, 53–61. For a discussion of "all the problems" that decree 4 caused in the years immediately following the Congregation, see Jean-Yves Calvez, "Lingering Unrest from 1980 to 1982," in *Faith and Justice: The Social Dimension of Evangelization*, trans. John E. Blewett, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 1991), 65–70 at 66. In this vein, GC 33 states that, "in all honesty, we must also acknowledge that this new understanding of our mission [decree 4] can lead to tensions both in the Society and outside it" (GC 33, d. 1, no. 33; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 449).

¹² Tripole, *Faith Beyond Justice*, 61.

ready by the time of GC 33, adherence to decree 4's formula began to break down. And so, while GC 33 does continue to confirm decree 4's formula in its conclusion to decree 1, it never uses the formula in the development of any of its argumentation.¹³ Rather, the decree speaks of the "commitment to faith *and* to justice," "our service of faith *and* promotion of justice," or "the promotion of justice" as "a matter of *growing urgency*" in the church, but not as an "absolute requirement."¹⁴ Finally, GC 33 notably rephrases decree 4's formula as "the integration of the service of faith and the promotion of justice in one single mission," replacing "absolute requirement" of the promotion of justice with "integration."¹⁵

Calling the promotion of justice "integral" to the service of faith rather than "an absolute requirement" plays a crucial role in defining the Jesuit mission, because if justice functions as an "absolute requirement," then every Jesuit undertaking must include efforts to promote it; but if justice functions as "integral," then such efforts need not appear in every case. For this reason, defining the promotion of justice as "integral" to the service of faith seems to alter fundamentally the understanding of the Jesuit mission in GC 32. Furthermore, this formulation seems to undercut the validity of the teaching of decree 4 altogether by allowing other elements of the Jesuit mission to take priority over the promotion of justice and perhaps even permit a service of faith that would not necessarily include the promotion of justice at all.¹⁶

2. The Repeal of the *Formula of the Institute*

St. Ignatius and the first companions drafted the *Formula of the Institute* as the foundational statement of the nature of the Jesuit mission, and Pope Julius III incorporated the *Formula* in its definitive form in the bull *Exposcit debitum* (July 21, 1550).¹⁷ By this bull, the pope in effect made

¹³ GC 33, d. 1, no. 50; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 455.

¹⁴ GC 33, d. 1, nos. 10, 31, 34; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 441, 448, 449; my italics.

¹⁵ GC 33, d. 1, no. 38; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 451.

¹⁶ GC 33 apparently attempts to obviate this last possibility by arguing for an "integration" of the promotion of justice with the service of faith "in one single mission" (GC 33, d. 1, no. 38; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 451).

¹⁷ *Formula of the Institute* 1550; Barton T. Geger, SJ, ed., *Constitutions of the Society*

conformity with the *Formula* the standard for judging the legitimacy of every mission in the Society of Jesus.¹⁸

The *Formula* states that, for one who wants to serve God in the Society of Jesus,

let him take it to heart that he belongs to a Society instituted especially to aim chiefly at the defense of the faith and its propagation, and at the progress of souls in Christian life and learning, by means of public preaching, lectures, and any other ministry whatsoever of the Word of God, and by means of spiritual exercises, the education of young and those uneducated in the Christian way of life, and the spiritual consolation of Christ's faithful in the hearing of confessions and in administering the other sacraments; and no less should he show himself to be useful (for no charge and taking no stipend at all for his own effort in all these works) in reconciling adversaries, in kind assistance and ministry to those in prisons or hospices, and in carrying out the other works of charity, just as seems to be more conducive to the glory of God and the common good.¹⁹

A problem here arises, then, in that the GC 32 decree that the promotion of justice constitutes an "absolute requirement" of the service of faith seems incompatible with the definitive statement of the *Formula*. To put this bluntly, how can the Jesuits posit the promotion of justice understood as social justice as an "absolute requirement" of the service of faith, when the *Formula* understands the Society "to aim chiefly at the defense of the faith and its propagation, and at the progress of souls in

of Jesus: *A Critical Edition with the Complementary Norms* (Chestnut Hill, MA: IJS, 2024), 59–71.

¹⁸ We cannot overstate the importance of the *Formula of the Institute* to the Society. GC 34 states that the "aim of our mission" has been "received from Christ," and is "presented in the Formula of the Institute" as "the service of faith" (d. 2, no. 14; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 527). In addition, GC 32 says of the *Formula* that "this primordial statement remains for us a normative one" (d. 4, no. 17; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 301). Furthermore, because a papal bull incorporates the *Formula*, the *Formula* "cannot be altered by any authority within the Society" (George E. Ganss, SJ, "Technical Introduction on the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus," in Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. and ed. George E. Ganss, SJ (St. Louis, MO: IJS, 1970), 35–59 at 45.

¹⁹ *Formula* 1550, no. 1; ed. Geger, 59–60.

Christian life and learning” and makes no mention whatsoever of the promotion of justice?

Furthermore, the promotion of justice—understood as social justice—fits the *Formula* only insofar as one interprets it as part of the final expression of the Jesuit mission—namely, “in carrying out the other works of charity.” But if the “justice” edict appears only in the final statement of the Jesuit mission, then one hardly can regard it, as decree 4 asserts, as “a dimension of all our [Jesuit] apostolic endeavors” or, as decree 2 asserts, as “the integrating factor of all our [Jesuit] ministries.”²⁰ Of course, apologists for the promotion of justice sometimes attempt to broaden the understanding of “justice” to include every ministry from the *Formula*, thereby hoping to make justice promotion an all-encompassing apostolate. However, understanding “justice” in this way stretches the term beyond GC 32’s understanding of justice specifically as social justice.²¹

II. Two Reformulations of the Nature of the Jesuit Mission

A. GC 34’s Reformulation

The documents of GC 34, which examine the teaching of decree 4 at length, never declare the decree wrong or unacceptable. In fact, the congregation says, “We reaffirm what is said in Decree 4 of GC 32.”²² In spite of this reaffirmation, however, the congregation expresses

²⁰ GC 32, d. 2, no. 9; d. 4, no. 47; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 292, 309.

²¹ For example, GC 33 “confirm[s]” that “the Society’s mission” is expressed in GC 32’s “Decrees 2 and 4, which are the application today of the *Formula of the Institute* and of our Ignatian charism,” such that the “universality” of the Society’s mission appears “in the various ministries in which we engage” (d. 1, no. 38; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 450–51). However, the document does not explain how decrees 2 and 4 apply the *Formula* or how the ministries in the *Formula* include the promotion of justice understood as social justice.

²² GC 34, d. 2, no. 14; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 527. Note, however, that the footnote cites GC 32’s decree 2 rather than decree 4 to illustrate the congregation’s reaffirmation of decree 4; decree 2 does not contain the “absolute requirement” clause (GC 32, d. 2, no. 9; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 292).

reservations, clarifying that decree 4 only “drew attention” to “integral dimensions of our mission” pertinent for understanding the Jesuit mission at the time but “now reaching maturity” in a new “experience” of our “ministries.”²³

As a result, while GC 32’s decree 4 asserts that “the mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement,” where the congregation understood “justice” as social justice, GC 34’s mature experience expressed in its decree 2 involves an entirely different understanding of “justice” as “the justice of the Kingdom” — a view that the congregation affirms as appropriate for the contemporary understanding of the Jesuit mission:

The aim of our mission received from Christ, as presented in the Formula of the Institute, is the service of faith. The integrating principle of our mission is the inseparable link between faith and the promotion of the justice of the Kingdom.²⁴

In other words: “our vocation [is] to serve faith and promote the justice of God’s Kingdom” toward which our service of faith is “directed.”²⁵

The newness of GC 34’s insight consists in that, while GC 32’s decree 4 “drew attention” to “integral dimensions of our mission,” GC 34’s decree 2 “deepen[s] and extend[s], in a more explicit way, the Society’s awareness” of its mission.²⁶ In this new awareness, the justice dimension of decree 4 of GC 32 “must be broadened to include, as integral dimensions, proclamation of the Gospel, [ecumenical] dialogue, and the evangelization of culture.”²⁷ The need to enlarge the meaning of justice arises today “out of an obedient attentiveness to what the Risen Christ is doing as he leads the world to the fullness of God’s Kingdom.”²⁸

²³ GC 34, d. 2, no. 14; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 527.

²⁴ GC 34, d. 2, no. 14; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 527.

²⁵ GC 34, d. 2, nos. 11, 15; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 526, 528.

²⁶ GC 34, d. 2, no. 14; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 527.

²⁷ GC 34, d. 2, no. 20; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 529.

²⁸ GC 34, d. 2, no. 20; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 529.

What does GC 34 mean here? Rather than rejecting as erroneous GC 32's decree 4 concept of social justice as the integrating principle of all Jesuit ministries, GC 34 seems to consider decree 4's formulation as dated. In other words, while acceptable in its time, decree 4 aimed largely at rectifying inner-worldly disorders, such as socio-economic injustice and political marginalization. In contrast, the new, deeper, more adequate understanding of justice available today casts the justice of God's Kingdom as the integrating principle of all Jesuit ministries. This makes for a much richer, more inclusive, more satisfying Christian understanding of Jesuit ministries, the purpose of which involves leading humankind to its ultimate goal—to wit, entrance into eternal life with God in his Kingdom. Thus, the integrating principle of all Jesuit missions now appears not as the promotion of justice understood as social justice but justice understood as the justice of God's Kingdom, both in this world and in the next.

B. Address by Peter-Hans Kolvenbach

In a similar vein, we consider here an address that Peter Hans Kolvenbach (1928–2016), superior general of the Society of Jesus from 1983 to 2008, delivered at Santa Clara University in October of 2000.²⁹

Earlier we noted that GC 32 never defined the words *faith* and *justice* used in decree 4's formulation of the nature of the Jesuit mission, and that the term *justice* there implies "social justice."³⁰ In his talk, Fr. Kolvenbach attested that his fellow delegates at GC 32 deliberately left the meanings of these two terms "ambiguous" and, for that reason, chose not to define them.³¹ Furthermore, he indicated that they did this precisely to emphasize "the radical change in our [Jesuit] mission."³² According to Fr. Kolvenbach, the congregation, in its use of the Greek expression

²⁹ Peter Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education," address delivered at Santa Clara University, October 6, 2000, *Santa Clara Lectures* 23, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 1–17; https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/sc_lectures/23. Note that he delivered this talk about five years after the end of GC 34.

³⁰ GC 33, d. 1, no. 32; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 448.

³¹ Kolvenbach, "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice," 5.

³² Kolvenbach, "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice," 6.

“diakonia fidei,” meant to refer “to Christ the suffering Servant carrying out his ‘diakonia’ in total service of his Father by laying down his life for the salvation of all,” and that the delegates intended the “promotion of justice” to include both “socio-economic justice” and “the justice of the Gospel.”³³ Fr. Kolvenbach admits, however, that leaving the meanings of the terms “ambiguous” led to “misunderstandings” and “distortions” of what GC 32 was saying, for which he expressed “the whole Society’s remorse.”³⁴

If true, all of this may indicate that the delegates at GC 32 nearly affirmed the new, integrating mission statement as GC 34 understood it, but that they still had not come to an understanding of the fullness of the mission, which they implicitly left for GC 34 to do. In any case, we should emphasize here that GC 34 continued to support “social ministries” in its more comprehensive understanding of the Jesuit mission.³⁵ In fact, GC 34 expresses in many ways the Jesuit obligation to work to destroy the structures of sin in the world in their various manifestations and that the Jesuits themselves must ground themselves “in religious charity, the charity of the Suffering Servant, the self-sacrificing love shown by the Savior.”³⁶

C. Fr. Arrupe’s Reformulation

Finally, we end with an address that Fr. Arrupe delivered in Rome on February 6, 1981, parts of which seem to undermine the central role that GC 32, which had concluded five years earlier, accorded to justice rather than to love.³⁷ In this address, one can hear the echo of Pope St. John Paul II’s second encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia* (1980), as here:

The entire life of a Jesuit should be inspired by charity and love. [. . .] Well, then, what is the precise relationship between charity and justice? [. . .] Obviously, the promotion of justice is indispensable, because it is the first step to charity. To claim justice sometimes seems revolutionary, a subversive claim.

³³ Kolvenbach, “The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice,” 4–5.

³⁴ Kolvenbach, “The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice,” 4–6.

³⁵ GC 34, d. 2, no. 7; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 524–25.

³⁶ GC 34, d. 2, no. 13; *Jesuit Life and Mission Today*, ed. Padberg, 527.

³⁷ Arrupe, “Rooted and Grounded in Love.”

And yet, it is so small a request: we really ought to ask for more, we should go beyond justice, to crown it with charity. Justice is necessary, but it is not enough. Charity adds its transcendent, inner dimension to justice, and, when it has reached the limit of the realm of justice, can keep going even further. Because justice has its 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 a claim to our unlimited service.

That is why anyone who has assimilated Christ's teaching and lives it radically cannot be satisfied with resisting injustice and promoting justice on an immanent human plane, but must of necessity be moved to do this out of love.³⁸

Fr. Arrupe adds very pointedly and succinctly: "Yes, justice is not enough. The world needs a stronger cure, a more effective witness and more effective deeds: those of love."³⁹

If Fr. Arrupe had lived long enough, he may have reformulated the nature of the Jesuit mission as "the service of faith through the promotion of a life of justice and love." Doing so may have cast the power of love—the power of the Holy Spirit—as the transcendent principle motivating all Jesuit apostolates, both temporal—including social justice—and spiritual—including the sacraments. From this perspective, perhaps no words would have better expressed the goal of Jesuit life than those of St. Paul in the Letter to the Galatians: "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love" (Ga 5:6).

³⁸ Arrupe, "Rooted and Grounded in Love," 158, 178–79; John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* (November 30, 1980), ch. 6: "Mercy . . . From Generation to Generation," § 12: "Is Justice Enough?," ¶ 3; https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html.

³⁹ Arrupe, "Rooted and Grounded in Love," 185.

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