

Press release

King Felipe VI inaugurates the World Assembly of Jesuit Universities

Deusto, the capital of Jesuit universities from 8 to 12 July.



Basque president Iñigo Urkullu, King Felipe VI, the Father General of the Society of Jesus, Arturo Sosa SJ and the Deusto rector José María Guibert.

As of yesterday, the University of Deusto is the capital of Jesuit universities. From 8 to 12 July, some 300 rectors and academic authorities from over 200 Jesuit universities, colleges and higher education institutions from across the world are attending the World Assembly of Jesuit Universities-IAJU under the slogan "Transforming Our World Together".



Cardinal Versaldi

This meeting, which began with the welcome address delivered by the Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi, ([complete speech in English / conferencia íntegra en castellano](#)) aims to prompt reflection and delve into some of the key challenges that Jesuit institutions and the world as a whole are facing. Examples include civic and political leadership, environmental and economic justice, education for the most disadvantaged groups, peace and reconciliation and interreligious dialogue.

Following the opening session, King Felipe VI; accompanied by the Father General of the Company of Jesus, Arturo Sosa; Basque president Iñigo Urkullu and the Deusto rector José María Guibert, presided the official inauguration. Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi; Pedro Duque, Spanish Minister of Science, Innovation and Universities and the Secretary of Higher Education of the Society of Jesus, Michael Garanzi, were also seated at the head table.



The Basque president Urkullu, the Deusto rector Guibert, King Felipe VI and the minister Pedro Duque.

The Rector's speech

The Deusto rector was the first speaker. Recalling St. Ignatius and the first Jesuits who declared that education of youth formed part of the common good and well-being of societies, José María Guibert highlighted that it is precisely "education, the common good and the great challenges of our global world that have prompted us to organise this international meeting at Deusto, in Bilbao and Loyola".

These days of meetings and conversations will focus on discernment of new challenges and opportunities for Jesuit universities. "Students, regions, science, education, institutions and collaboration form the core of the challenges we are facing. And we want to fulfil our tasks with the specific values imbued in our mission and identity: faith, justice, inculturation, dialogue and reconciliation", he affirmed. ([Complete speech](#))

The Father General's speech



Father General Arturo Sosa receives a Basque *makila* from Deusto rector Guibert. Handmade by traditional craftsmen from Hendaya, this traditional walking stick has been engraved with the emblems of the University of Deusto and the Society of Jesus.

The next speaker was the Father General of the Jesuits, Arturo Sosa, SJ, who emphasised that "we have the opportunity to take a giant step forward in the Society of Jesus's service to the Church's universities' and the world. We must grow through collaboration among ourselves and unite in a common horizon and ideals supporting the great work being done at universities all over the world". Our responsibility today is to "plot a course so that we can delve more deeply into our joint commitment, without losing any of our roots in each of the places we are present" in order to "help the Church in its discernment of the service of reconciliation between human beings, with Creation and with God".

Cardinal Ravasi's speech



Cardinal Ravasi

Cardinal Ravasi then delivered a speech entitled "Catholic Social Teaching and the Role of the Jesuit University Today". He analysed some of the challenges that humankind faces in today's world such as multiculturalism (and a preferably dynamic concept of interculturality), the fragmented-self, technocracy, post-truth, secularism and its variants. He went on to focus on two cornerstones of the contemporaneous world: science and communication. He pointed out that contemporary science raises new challenges for anthropology, as do manipulation of DNA, neurocognitive sciences and artificial intelligence. These subjects all pose crucial questions concerning the meaning of being human, with important and "turbulent" consequences also from the philosophical-theological-ethical perspectives. He also mentioned that communication and social media sites have, in his opinion, a great impact on the human person. ([Conferencia en castellano íntegra](#) / [complete speech in English](#)).

The Basque president's speech

Lehendakari Urkullu stated that the focus issues of the Jesuit Assembly form part of the Basque people's concerns and challenges for the future. He noted the area of work on "Background for political and civic leadership" with interest because "our project is based on values like identity, belonging, work culture, earnestness and solidarity. These values are the best asset an open, responsible, comprehensive and honest society can have".

He added that people are the central point of the Basque social project and therefore the reflection on "education of the excluded and economic and environmental justice" is a key priority. Two thirds of the Basque country's budget goes to social policies to advance in building a more cohesive and fairer society as these prove to be the most competitive and advanced. Basque Government policies are imbued with the solidarity principle. This internal and external principle is the context for our engagement with immigrants and refugees.

This is closely linked to another area of interest: the reflections on "Understanding and interreligious dialogue" and also "Peace and reconciliation". He therefore stated that "now that the Basque Country has emerged from the black tunnel of violence and terrorism, our mission is to continue working together to strengthen a culture of peace in our area, establish coexistence based on human rights and pluralism; and uplift the determination "to live together in peace" to the category of a shared value.

He concluded by expressing his desire to create a social Basque Country and Europe "with a soul". He said that the Basque Government is studying the prioritisation of social policies that support welfare systems, addressing the labour integration of youth, women and the long-term unemployed. They also intend to propose ways to address the challenges of demographics and the ageing population through policies to support families and conciliation. [Complete speech by the lehendakari.](#)

The King's speech

King Felipe VI gave the last address in the opening session. He recalled the 500 years of the Society of Jesus, five centuries of a universal project serving faith, humanism and people's dignity. "The last general congregations confirm this: social justice, coexistence, progress, peace... these are some of the key concepts of the Jesuit mission of service and commitment to the world. We know that you are now going through a period of reflection to decide your apostolic priorities for the next 10 years". He therefore encouraged the universities to examine this path in depth as the values they promote are more necessary today than ever.

He also recalled his student days at Georgetown University, where he learned that academic excellence must go hand in hand with values like hard work, responsibility and the common good. From personal experience, he knows that the Jesuit education model is one which combines academic excellence and values to serve others.

"With these principles, Jesuit universities must continue shaping open-minded leaders who have a broad vision of the future; they must continue preparing men and women capable of making the slogan of this Assembly come true: Transforming Our World Together, and the principle that education is the most valuable lever for our world's political transformation", he stated. [The King's complete speech](#)

Six thematic areas



Presentation of the six thematic areas of work.

Today's activities continued with the presentation of the six thematic focus areas which the different Jesuits will work on in groups (task forces). "Leadership background", "Civic and political leadership", Economic and environmental justice", Educating the excluded and the poor", "Interreligious dialogue, collaboration, and understanding" and "Peace and reconciliation".

A background in leadership at the university

The Universities are examining the education provided from the perspective of the Ignatian identity and their experience in academic background. They will also discuss the position of women in Jesuit leadership. Other issues for debate: To what extent are Jesuit universities a “social project” devoted to transforming the world?

Civic and political leadership

Reflection on this point aims to address issues related to how Jesuit universities can boost promotion of Catholic social thought in students' education. What are the best practices available on the Jesuit higher education network for this subject?

Inter-religious dialogue, collaboration and understanding

This reflection intends to address questions such as: Are there model educational programmes on leadership for inter-religious dialogue between students and campus religious groups? Are there programmes that promote this dialogue? How can universities foster tolerance and religious understanding? How can dialogue be extended to include the voices of minorities?

Economic and environmental justice

In view of the unprecedented problems caused by the destruction of the planet's most vital ecosystems, the Jesuits are going to raise the question of how the Society of Jesus and the Church are addressing such problems in places like the Amazon Basin or the Republic of the Congo. They will also explore the objective of teaching environmental and economic justice through their curricula. “not a single student should graduate from our universities without having reached a good level of knowledge on ethics, the environment and economics”.

Educating the excluded and the poor

The Jesuits raise the following question in their approach to the poor and the excluded: Where are we now, as per what works and what doesn't? Where can we improve? The poor and excluded must form part of university activities.

Peace and reconciliation

The objective in this section is to delve into the value added of Ignatian spirituality in solving conflicts and boosting the work for peace. Ethic and migratory diversity must be approached from peace and reconciliation. The intention is to become aware of the conflict that could arise from not acknowledging this diversity and also to share what is being done and can be achieved in this area.

Programme

Tomorrow's meeting, on 10 July, will start off with a speech by Pankaj Mishra, a political expert. At 9:00, he will deliver the address entitled: “Social and Political Fragmentation and the Role of the Jesuit University”. At 14:15, the Jesuit economist Gaël Giraud will speak on “Economic Inequality and Environmental Degradation and the Role of the Jesuit University”.

On 11 July, Wednesday, the event will continue at the Loyola Sanctuary in Azpeitia. The Father General of the Society of Jesus, Arturo Sosa, will deliver a speech and the founding document of the new International Association of Jesuit Universities-IAJU will be signed. This

association will provide the entire Jesuit university network with a legal status, structure and stability and will give new impetus to universities all over the world.

Finally, on 12 July, the projects resulting from the work performed in the task forces will be presented. In the plenary session at 14:30, the reports, conclusions and recommendations will be shared.

The University of Deusto was chosen to host this 2018 event out of a select group of candidates from across the world. This Assembly is a distinction which recognises and supports the University of Deusto and the city of Bilbao in general. The founding of the Association opens up a new world of possibilities for Deusto's internationalisation and networking with universities all over the world. The first two Assemblies were held in Mexico (2010) and Melbourne (2015).



Deusto rector Guibert, Cardinal Versaldi, Bilbao mayor Juan Mari Aburto, Cardinal Ravasi and the Bishop of Bilbao, Mario Iceta.

Further information:

- Webpage: <http://iaju.deusto.es/>.
- Newsletter: A daily newsletter will be sent with an account of all the activities, photographs, videos and documentation created.
- Subscribe to the newsletter <http://iaju.deusto.es/newsletter>
- Social media sites:
Twitter (<http://twitter.com/iajunews>)
Facebook (<http://facebook.com/iajunews>)
Flickr (<http://flickr.com/iajunews>)
YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1gPBpt2ERJUAAnTtVDD8QQ>).

[Press kit](#)

Bilbao, 9 July 2018.