

Press release

Third day of the World Assembly of Jesuit Universities at the University of Deusto with speeches by the political expert Pankaj Mishra and the economist Gaël Giraud

King Felipe VI inaugurated this international event yesterday. Over 300 rectors and academic authorities from more than 200 Jesuit universities across the world have gathered at Deusto.



Pankaj Mishra's speech in the Paraninfo.

Since Sunday, the University of Deusto has been the world 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 have gathered for the World Assembly of Jesuit Universities-IAJU under the slogan "Transforming Our World Together".

Accompanied by the Father General of the Society of Jesus, Arturo Sosa; the Basque president Iñigo Urkullu and the Deusto rector José María Guibert, King Felipe VI of Spain presided the official inauguration of this event which included speeches by the Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi and Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi. Other participants in the first day of the event were Pedro Duque, Spanish Minister of Science, Innovation and Universities and the Secretary of Higher Education of the Society of Jesus, Michael Garanzi.



Father General Arturo Sosa blessed the attendees at the prayers that started off the event on Tuesday, 10 July.

The political expert Pankaj Mishra

Today, 10 July, the Assembly began its third day with a speech by the political expert Pankaj Mishra, a well known Indian writer of literary and political essays. In his talk entitled "Social and Political Fragmentation and the Role of Jesuit Universities, he defended the need for a new Enlightenment. In his opinion, the Enlightenment of the 18th century, which provided the philosophical scaffolding for today's modern society, has run its course. Individual reason and group progress are no longer linked to this movement.

According to the writer, it is now fashionable to blame religion, particularly Islam, for all of today's problems. He believes it would be more practical to make a criticism of the enlightened ideal of "a self-made autonomous individual who is building the world, a fantasy which has now deteriorated into hostile tribalism or equally war-like forms of individualism."

The speaker recalled that it was Immanuel Kant who described the Enlightenment as "man's emergence from a self-imposed immaturity" and affirms that what we need now is "a new beginning or at least a way out of today's self-imposed immaturity that has turned the former Enlightenment into a fetish, seducing us with words like: free market, liberalism, democracy, nation-building." Pankaj Mishra invites us to abandon this modern faith based on the imperative to grow, expand, possess and instrumental calculation.

In view of this situation, the writer asks what can be done and points out that the alternatives are, on the one hand, to return to an ethnically pure community or, on the other, search for a new way to relate to the world, and all its inanimate objects and living beings. He admits that he does not have the magic formula but finds examples in figures from the last decades whose thinking and endeavours were people-centred: Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Vaclav Havel, Simone Weil and Jacques Maritain. People "who dared to question the worn out and inefficient frameworks derived from the Age of Reason".

Lastly, he noted that while it may well be true that the Enlightenment means that man emerged from that self-imposed immaturity, the task is never truly complete and must be continuously renewed by each generation. "Once again, this is our task and we have to do it globally this time", he concluded.



The writer Pankaj Mishra.

Speech by the economist Gaël Giraud, SJ

The second speech today, entitled "Economic Inequality and Environmental degradation and the Role of Jesuit Universities" was delivered by the Jesuit Gaël Giraud. The Principal Investigator of the CNRS (French National Center for Scientific Research) and member of the Paris School of Economics warned that although inequality seems to have decreased in the last decades, data collection worldwide shows that the gap is actually widening.

Wealth is in the hands of a few and the division between rich and poor is, in his opinion, one of the biggest threats that we must overcome to achieve social cohesion. The problem of education is closely related to this situation and also exists in western nations. He therefore noted that, for the first time in history, parents see that their sons and daughters are going to have greater difficulty receiving higher education than they did. The future looks even bleaker in poor countries.

He believes that even rich nations are feeling the impact of social inequality as this problem contributes to global warming. 10% of the population is responsible for half of greenhouse emissions worldwide while the most impoverished only account for one tenth of the total. He thinks that the challenge for coming generations is how to organise their societies to achieve a low ecological footprint and a high level of human development as our current standard of living is not sustainable.



The economist Gaël Giraud

Working sessions on the thematic areas

Today's activities continued with the working sessions on the six key thematic areas of the Assembly: "A university background in leadership", "Civic and political leadership", "Economic and environmental justice", "Education of the excluded and poor", "Inter-religious dialogue, collaboration and understanding" and "Peace and reconciliation".



View of the one of the group work sessions.

Programme

TOMORROW, Wednesday, 11 July: the Assembly's activities will take place at the Loyola Sanctuary in Azpeitia. Two key moments will be the speech by the Father General of the Society of Jesus, Arturo Sosa, and the signing of the founding document for the new International Assembly of Jesuit Universities-IAJU. This association will provide the Jesuit

university network with the legal status, structure and stability needed and will give impetus to universities across the world.

The Assembly will end on 12 July in a session during which the projects from the group work sessions will be presented. A plenary session will then be held at 14:30 where the reports, conclusions and recommendations will be shared.

The University of Deusto was chosen to host this event from a select group of candidates worldwide. It is a distinction that recognises and supports the University of Deusto and the city of Bilbao in general while setting up the Association will open a world of new possibilities for Deusto's internationalisation and networking with universities across the world. The first two Assemblies were held in Mexico (2010) and Melbourne (2015).

Further information

- Webpage: <http://iaju.deusto.es/>.
- Newsletter: A newsletter will be sent daily 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/UC1qPBpt2ERJUAAAnTtVDD8QQ>).

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Bilbao, 10 July 2018