

Press release

## **The Father General of the Society of the Jesus, Arturo Sosa, the leading figure in Loyola on the fourth day of the World Assembly of Jesuit Universities**

During today's session, the founding document of the new International Association of Jesuit Universities- IAJU was signed.



Michael Garanzini and Arturo Sosa during the signing of the IAJU's founding document.

The World Assembly of Jesuit Universities continued for the fourth day in Loyola today, July 11, with the General Father of the Society of Jesus, Arturo Sosa, taking the leading role. Today's events consisted of his address "The University as a Source of a Reconciled Life" and the signing of the founding document of the new International Association 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.

In his address, the Father General stated that reconciliation is possible when one has a full life. For this reason, "the growing commitment of the Society of Jesus within the university's endeavour takes on its meaning through the desire to effectively contribute to enabling a dignified full life for each and every human being, both in the present and in the future".

Focusing on the theme "Transforming Our World Together", this event, held from 8 to 12 July at the University of Deusto, has been attended by 300 rectors and academic authorities from over 200 Jesuit universities, colleges and higher education institutions worldwide. The Father General highlighted that one of the objectives is "to become strengthened as a universal apostolic body inspired by the Ignatian charism, united by a fruitful humanist intellectual tradition, rooted in the Christian faith."



Deusto vice-rector Alvaro de la Rica greets the Father General Arturo Sosa. On the right, the Provincial of Spain, Antonio España.

Therefore, the meeting affords an opportunity to share a look at the world as we are moved by the plight of the immigrants, human beings who are searching for better lives, victims of violence, the impoverished who call for justice or who have been scorned for the colour of their skin or their religious beliefs. The Father General explained that this look also seeks to discover the roots of injustice and help to propose alternatives for economic and social transformation. This involves an educational challenge, a new way of placing ourselves before this reality. Jesús Arturo Sosa said "we embody the preferential option for the poor, by which the university becomes a project of social transformation to generate a full life". The Society of Jesus was founded and takes on its meaning by collaborating in the mission of reconciliation which includes contributing to social justice.

### **The environment and the new digital culture**

The Father General believes that we are far from having the necessary conditions for humans to live in peace. Father General Arturo Sosa made special mention of the environment as an example of injustice and inequality, calling it our "common home" and highlighting its sad deterioration.

“Reconciliation with the environment is still unfinished business, on which we and our institutions need to take on greater responsibility”, he stated.

The Father General went on to say that “we face the enormous challenge of soundly joining in the new digital culture “. In his opinion, "this is not only a technological revolution, but the creation of a new world in which we live. The digital ecosystem is the beginning of a profound change of the human cultural paradigm."

Arturo Sosa referred to the university as “a community of spiritual interests committed to the search for truth”, “an incessant task” as the university is “always open to critically recognising the provisional nature of knowledge. ”.



Arturo Sosa

### **The university, a privileged space of human freedom**

The Father General explained the new meaning that the Catholic presence takes on in the university during this period characterised by tension between secularism and religious and ideological fundamentalism. “The university is a diverse environment in which the conditions for dialogue and in-depth understanding of historical, personal and intellectual processes are produced. It is a privileged space for exercising human freedom. Freedom to *search and find* the paths of social transformation through research and teaching.”

The Jesuits’ highest representative emphasised the difference of Jesuit universities for which “it is not enough to reach the intellectual depth to develop knowledge”, as the true challenge is that it should be an "apostolate" and the responsibility of having been called "to create". “Creative capacity”- he

explained by saying, "This creative ability is demonstrated above all in its ability to anticipate its time, to be several steps ahead".

The Father General also reflected on concepts such as citizenship, globalisation and the worldwide situation although he stressed the "need to discern the tendencies and possible outcomes of globalising currents to promote those that produce a full life". He therefore stated that globalisation and cultural standardisation could even endanger multiculturalism. "In contrast, the universalising trends would multiply the opportunities of multicultural spaces and promote opportunities for interculturality. It would also provide an opportunity for the contribution of the spiritual experience of religions as a dimension of cultures, thus promoting the overcoming of fundamentalisms".

"Educating people for world citizenship involves recognising diversity as a constitutive dimension of a full human life.". According to the Father General, becoming world citizens would be one of the "outcomes to be achieved from studying or working in an educational institution of the Society of Jesus". In this respect, he believes that part of the Jesuit educational endeavour involves making it possible for some people to serve in politics. "Supporting the education of those who choose to serve through politics is one of the most important contributions we can make to the betterment of human societies worldwide".



### **Our identity is our contribution**

The Father General also discussed the rich Jesuit educational tradition and the need to adapt to the present time, the tension of creative loyalty as a profound demand of *the magis*. "True loyalty is manifested through new ways of addressing current challenges. Being loyal to our tradition means creatively

responding to the signs of the times by relying on the identity that binds us to that tradition.”

In Jesús Arturo Sosa’s opinion, the identity of the universities entrusted to the Jesuits is not directly related to the number of Jesuits in the university community but in the capacity to share the spirit that moves them. He expressed his hope that many Jesuits will undertake the complex task of university work but above all “we want to have many companions with whom to move our university’s responsibilities forward.”

In his address, the Father General referred to the challenges raised by the *magis*.university. The first refers to overcoming geographic or social boundaries. He added, “We have been sent to those places that are not easy to reach, and which others have avoided. The university education provided by the Society of Jesus seeks to be open to all and has been particularly called upon to reach out to the marginalised or impoverished, to refugees and to those who have been displaced due to the unfair social relations that prevail in today’s world”.

The second challenge and “perhaps most complex mandate” “has been handed to us by General Congregation 36 by inviting us to promote a culture of safeguarding vulnerable people”. He explained that this involves a widespread enough cultural change to create a healthy safe environment for each and every human being. Fostering this change means touching the unfair structures of today’s societies, with all the risks this entails. A safeguarding culture is particularly embodied in its respect for human rights.

### **Collaborative work yields more fruitful results**

The Father General ended his talk by mentioning the steps that must be taken to improve the university’s outcomes, whose guidelines were already set out at GC 36. He therefore stated that discernment guides and gives meaning to plans for the best use of the resources available to achieve the university’s objectives. Arturo Sosa went on to say that universities can only work properly through collaboration. “That is why we insist on calling it a university community. We all know that there is still much to do to further the collaboration efforts both within the university and between the different universities, considering the multiple possibilities that open up to it.”

Collaboration is a key aspect of this worldwide Jesuit event. “This World Meeting of Jesuit Universities, held here in Loyola and in Bilbao, is seeking to make history on this path of discernment, in apostolic planning, collaboration and networking by creating the long-prepared Meeting of the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU), whereby we can welcome a new era and a new style of fruitful work within the university”. ([Conferencia íntegra en castellano](#) / [Full address in English](#))



Following his address, the founding document of the IAJU was signed. One of the new Association's objectives is to contribute to developing Jesuit education and the Society's mission through promoting projects and programmes to improve the quality of these institutions and also extend Jesuit higher education to the excluded and poor in every possible instance.

Father General Arturo Sosa and the Secretary of Higher Education of the Society of Jesus; Michael Garanzini, signed the IAJU Charter, along with a representative from each of the 6 geographic areas that make up the Society. Founding document signed.



## Programme

The Assembly that has made the University of Deusto the world capital of Jesuit universities will end TOMORROW, 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 for this event from a select group of candidates worldwide. Hosting this event 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>)

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Flickr (<http://flickr.com/iajunews>)

YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1gPBpt2ERJUAAnttVDD8QQ>).

[Press kit](#)

Loyola, 11 July 2018.