



# THE PORTAL TO JESUIT STUDIES

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## The Role of Jesuit Schools and Their Future, Pedro Arrupe (1972)

*On November 10, 1972, Father General Pedro Arrupe delivered the following address to a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Jesuit Secondary Education Association in the United States of America (JSEA) held at Fordham University in New York City. These remarks were one of two on the state and future of Jesuits and education that Arrupe delivered during his visits to North, Central and South America in 1972, with the other address focused on the role of Jesuits in higher education. As editor Jerome Aixala notes, "the immediate audience of the following address was the American Jesuit teacher and school administrator, but the challenging questions and encouraging concern will find resonance in the ears and heart of every Jesuit schoolman in other countries, not least of all in India, in their search for the meaning of their school work."*

### *1. Jesuit Educators meet in U.S.A., India, Rome, Japan, Mexico*

I am very happy to be with you today. Through such face-to-face encounters we lift to a higher level of intensity the dialogue carried on in part through exchange of letters and circulation of reports. In exchanging our reflections, we grow in the "*unio cordium*," which St. Ignatius urged in season and out of season. In a sense we are contributing to a type of communal discernment for the whole Society on the meaning of the Jesuit apostolate in secondary school education.

I am not being merely courteous when I congratulate you on the outstanding work you have been responsible for during the past two years. I am genuinely convinced that through your many activities you are leading Jesuit secondary school educators to a truly penetrating study of the meaning of your work and its future. As you are surely aware, Jesuits in other countries are engaged in a similar search.

In May last year, for example, some 100 Jesuits from every part of India spent six days together discussing the direction their 85 secondary schools should take in the years ahead. The report of the meeting, *Not Without a Compass*, reveals that they tackled the toughest of questions. That they intended their deliberations to be of service to all educators throughout India is clear from the fact that they considered Jesuit education within the context of national development.



At the Jesuit Curia in Rome in September 1970, we were privileged to host a meeting of Jesuit prefects or directors of study from most of the western European countries. Through four days they discussed what the future held for Jesuit secondary schools. Their reports on student attitudes in their different countries made it clear that European youth faces basically the same major questions in every country. It was striking to see, for example, that almost all were agreed that problems concerning personal faith, which a generation ago were widespread at the university level, are now quite common among secondary school students.

If we turn to east and southeast Asia we see that a small, resourceful group of Jesuits organized and helped direct a truly historic meeting for educators from some fifteen countries during the entire month of August 1971. Held in Kyoto, Japan, this educators' social action workshop brought together approximately fifteen educators from each of thirteen east and southeast Asian countries to work out ways of incorporating in their educational systems the major provisions of the United Nations universal declaration of human rights.

This meeting, let me emphasize, was not a meeting of Jesuits. It was, however, organized by a network of Jesuits, known as the Committee for Development of Socio-Economic Life in Asia (SELA) which for the past decade has unobtrusively been sponsoring think-tanks on major social issues.

Less than a year ago—in December to be exact—a group of Jesuits met for one week in Oaxtepec, Mexico, to explore a whole range of questions relating to education, both institutional and non-institutional. Their report has formed the basis for discussion on the part of Jesuits in almost all Latin American countries and will, I predict, generate several kinds of practical response. Its five major conclusions you will, I am sure, have no difficulty in resonating to. They are:

- 1) The basic criterion for the revision of our educational apostolate in Latin America is social and distributive justice, and in the measure that we give ourselves to these demands shall we be fulfilling the *magis* that our vocation requires of us.
- 2) We have therefore to shift the thrust of our labors from the products of our education to the producers of social change.
- 3) To achieve this new thrust we shall need both to train the young Jesuits going into education and to retrain the older ones already lodged in it.
- 4) The most effective school for this training or retraining will be the *schola affectus* of the Exercises and community discernment, wherein Christ is both the medium and the message.
- 5) No matter how valiant our efforts, they will always fall far short of national needs. All the more reason, then, why we should extend our collaboration to, and seek the collaboration of, other church and national bodies whose educational ideals we share.



Finally, I should like to mention briefly two seminars held in Rome to help the Superiors-General of major religious congregations and their councilors keep abreast of some of the more notable trends in education. The first, held in November 1970, enabled us to hear and enter into discussion with Paulo Freire, whose works you are all familiar with, and with Maurice Strong, the organizer of the United Nations Conference on the Environment. The second, which took place in May this year, focused our attention on the role of education in the promotion of justice among men. Like the meeting in Asia I referred to, these two seminars were obviously not Jesuit affairs. But we made them our concern, and I believe we contributed to their fruitfulness.

## *2. Corporate Sense of Identity in Worldwide Movement*

I mention these meetings not to feed a sense of corporate complacency but to strengthen your sense of identity with a worldwide movement of men asking themselves in serenity and seriousness how best we can serve our Lord. No less do I mean to assure you that your own contributions, through the presence of Father McDermott – both in India and at the Rome meeting of Prefects of Study – and through your publications, have been felt, deeply appreciated, and gratefully acknowledged.

I mention these meetings for yet another reason; namely, to make clear how important they are, and how important it is that their findings and recommendations reach down to the individual school, to the individual administrator and teacher. There are some who argue that our lives are cluttered up with meetings and that we gather largely to pool our bewilderment or ignorance. They call for a moratorium on meetings and for a return to the quiet of individual contemplation. It is easy to understand this line of thinking, for some meetings are unproductive, while the results of others are never felt. But the conclusion to be drawn from this is surely that we should be more conscientious in preparing, and leading to fruitful conclusions the meetings in which we do take part.

Who could doubt, for example, the worth of the meeting which issued in your *Preamble*, the April 1971 national meeting of your Association in Chicago, the June meeting of your Association's Commission on Research and Development, as well as those for teachers of religion and for presidents of your schools? Certainly the impact of your *Preamble* has been extraordinary, while the response to the CORD report, "The Jesuit High School of the Future," will, I predict, be gratifyingly enthusiastic.

So, let meetings flourish, I say, provided that they are solidly prepared, professionally conducted, stimulate responsible feedback, and issue in action responding to the needs of our time.



### *3. Possible Responses to Questioning on Role of our Schools*

This demanding and at times painful work of self-study and projections for the future is all the more necessary now that each individual community we are preparing for the forthcoming General Congregation. As we explore earnestly and serenely what the vocation, mission, and apostolate of *the Society of today* are to be, we are asking about *our* community, about *our* school, *our* place in the Society of Jesus, about *our* role in society itself.

Each day, the role of our schools in society comes under more strident questioning. One response open to us is to give up our work in order to begin something new; specifically, leave the educational apostolate and turn to more specifically pastoral works, especially such as bring us directly in the midst of the poor. Another response is to carry on what we are doing as in the past. A third response is to carry on, indeed, but to improve on past performance. This, I take it, is your response – a wise one indeed. You, it seems, are evaluating the criticisms so rampant today. You are not flinching from those which point to weaknesses in your own schools. You are uniting your efforts to share the best in each of your schools with your confreres in other cities and thus are making it clear that the “mindlessness” of which Charles Silberman accused American educators does not characterize your own efforts.

We are all, I am sure, at one in our conviction of the unique contribution of Catholic education to the community at large. It is not to sustain a minority culture. It is not to provide a competitive educational system in order to prevent the state system from becoming monolithic. Its unique contribution, as Dr. Mary-Angela Harper so well expressed it, “*is its precise understanding of the human person as a God-related being and its explicit teaching and developing and implementing of the values that flow from this understanding, values that nourish and strengthen the entire public community. If we choose to dilute our identity as religious, value-oriented schools, we will have cheated not only ourselves, but even our fellow citizens in the civic sector.*”

This is extremely well said, an encouraging reaffirmation of your own views in your *Preamble* and in the *CORD Statement*. I know that you will study and discuss this *Statement* with the same enthusiasm that marked reflections on the *Preamble*, and that the parents of your students as well as teachers in many schools will draw enlightenment and strength from it. Let me draw your attention to its initial statement concerning three ways of viewing the Church as reflected in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and then suggest one or two lines of thought that you may want to develop further. We can understand the Church as the visible means of man’s salvation instituted by Christ; as a kerygmatic event issuing in the People of God; and as a prophetic servant to all men. Each of these views reflects the wonderful richness of the Church from one particular angle. They are complementary, not contradictory.



#### 4. *Kerygmatic Apostolate and Prophetic Service*

When we see the Church as kerygmatic event, we focus on Christ, revealed as Son and proclaimed as Lord, drawing all peoples into a community of believers, forming them into the People of God. When we see it as prophetic servant, we focus on it as pointing to the One Who is always coming yet already in our midst, reflected surely if obscurely in the faces of the scattered sheep of Israel. In our schools, does this not mean that we should strive to build a true community, one which becomes more and more aware of its identity as a recipient of gifts given precisely so that they may be shared? Our students are not to see themselves as isolated individuals learning how to elbow their way through hostile masses to positions of power and prestige. Rather, let them discover in ways they can never forget that they are brothers in a planetary village, fellow pilgrims on spaceship earth. Perhaps in the past we stressed individual achievement somewhat too much. Who can say with certainty? But now, let us be ingenious in educating our students – and ourselves – to *“the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in way afflicted.”* As part of the People of God, let them experience that they are to be led by the Spirit of the Lord as they labor *“to decipher authentic signs of God’s presence and purpose in the happenings, needs, and desires in which this People has a part along with other men of our age.”*

As the Church explicates its mission, so should our schools work *“to structure and consolidate the human community according to the divine law ... [and to] initiate activities on behalf of all men.”* This emphasis on service for the human development of all people is the hallmark of the Church today. As I mentioned last year in my letter, *“The Social Commitment of the Society of Jesus,”* we are called to this service, yet *“there still remains a gap between the intentions publicly expressed and the reality of the apostolate.”*

#### 5. *Jesuit Schools’ Global View*

Let no one say that this mission of expanding the mind to global views and schooling the heart to a spirit of service is outside the scope of a Jesuit high school. If our faculties and students were outraged at injustice, zealous in study and service, experienced in doing without, and yearning for contemplation, they would serve the Church today as Canisius and Regis, Bellarmine and Claver did in their day.

How, you may ask, can this be done in an educational institution? Through curriculum, I would answer; through educational theory and methods; through teaching and living Christian values; but most effectively through the type of education described by a brother Jesuit as follows: *“... the ‘new humanism’ should place a counterstress on the more social virtues: sensitivity to human need; concern for the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, not so much as objects of charity but as subjects of rights, as equals who must be helped to help themselves, so that by taking their rightful share of the cost of human development they may also take their rightful share of its rewards.”*



We show a genuine interest in combating injustice in the third world by respecting persons in our schools, by dialoguing with students, by encouraging interdependent activities among teachers, by individualized instruction, by social action as a constitutive part of a curriculum designed to promote reflectiveness, contemplation, meditation.

#### *6. Evaluation: Student, Teacher, Pedagogy*

As Jesuits we are accustomed to examining ourselves daily. We are now corporately examining where we stand in today's world. For yourselves as educators I think this means that you will want to judge your effectiveness in meeting the educational needs of our time. This examination will lead you to look closely at the student, the teacher and the entire educational environment and technology. Let me comment briefly on each of these points.

Those who draw up criteria for judging the effectiveness of our educational programs today should situate the student in a "*new stage of history*." Historically our listing of educational goals tended to emphasize the "*perennial*" needs of all peoples. We must now recognize the urgency of responding to the "*special*" needs of each person in this special period of cultural change. "*These changes recoil upon [the individual person], his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and to people.*" The special needs of youth today are vastly different from those of students in a rural, pre-industrialized society. If we ignore this fact, we will be trapped into dealing with students in a regimented, routine-structured way that reflects nothing of the joy and confidence of *Gaudium et Spes* and *Octogesima Adveniens*.

I would like to invite each school to list the needs of their students today and to discuss them in relation to curriculum and the total school experience. Certainly these discussions will include such very practical matters as individualized learning, practice in decision-making, living experiences with those of other economic and racial backgrounds, service to others and, obviously opportunities to find God in private and public prayer.

Further, I hope that as you evaluate your schools you give much care to a description of a good teacher and his irreplaceable role in a school sensitive to individual needs, to the oppressed and to the special community we call the Church.

Your discussions will certainly lead you to deeper insights into the educational philosophy that is reflected in your institutions – especially in the United States: where you are flooded with pedagogical innovations of every kind, it is imperative that we have administrators and teachers truly competent in the field of pedagogy. It would be a most serious dereliction of duty if special help and guidance were not available to the over one thousand, one hundred Jesuits who are now working in your high schools. I urge every province to have some Jesuits thoroughly prepared in educational theory and practice so that they can help guide our schools in continuity with our best traditions through the unchartered educational seas of the 1970's.



### *7. Religious Education*

I do not need to tell you that religious education today is not easy. The experience of every day brings home to you this fact. I do, however, want to urge all of you to examine carefully what kind of religious education is found in our schools today. In one of our better schools in another country I was told that some of the best students confided to a teacher-friend that they were atheists only during religion class. Such a remark should stir all of us to reflection. If during your review of the state of religious education in your school you find that you are not meeting the needs of your students, I know that you will avail yourselves of the experience and knowledge of your Commission on Religious Education. In this field, above all, I trust that we will all share with one another such experiences as can be mutually helpful. I trust too that your cooperation will extend far beyond your own schools and include brothers and sisters and lay teachers who, like yourselves, are laboring so tirelessly on behalf of youth.

In short, my dear brothers, as we draw together around Christ, we shall see indeed what our contemporaries see in the field of education: the beds that have borne only sixty, some only thirty, percent of the hundredfold we confidently expected when we went out sowing. We shall see the patches of rocky soil which have long ceased to bear fruit at all. We shall see the clumps of thorns which have choked both the fruits of the harvest and the enthusiasm of some of the harvesters. We shall see all these, but we shall not be discouraged by them, for with Christ we have lifted our gaze and rearticulated our vision, as your CORD Statement so challengingly expresses it, to the rich promise that beckons and sustains the valiant laborer in his Lord's vineyard. Be assured of my prayers that your laborers be many and your harvest great.

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**Original Source (English translation):**

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