

Cycle of the Mission in the Society of Jesus

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Abstract: *Global apostolic challenges we face today call us to collaborate among apostolic sectors and institutions, Provinces and Conferences in order to offer an integral response. This kind of response will be built, developed and evaluated in a network ruled by Ignatian values. In the following pages we offer some characteristics of the methodology that can be used.*

1. A new context: global apostolic challenges

We live in a globalized world. All the countries are facing today the same social, economic and cultural phenomena, such as migration, cultural diversity, pressure from global financial and economic markets, secularization and diminishing traditional cultures, ecology and climate change, fundamentalism, change of values especially strong among the youth, radical technological transformations etc. At the same time, these phenomena show different characteristics depending on regions and countries.

These changes are not necessarily negative. They are ambiguous and include, at the same time, possibilities/opportunities and risks. But we (in general terms the Church) have to look at them without fear but recognizing that they are demanding us deep changes in our way of responding.

All these complex phenomena affect the people we are called to serve and they also affect our lives. Our mission of service of the faith and promotion of justice in dialogue and collaboration with others compels us to give today an integral response to these phenomena that have already become for us global apostolic challenges.

When we speak about the integrality of the response to these global apostolic challenges we want to mention two elements. First, this response needs to be coherent in different countries and regions. And second, it involves very different aspects that include research, pastoral care, educational services, service to victims, advocacy, etc.

More specifically, this response cannot be individualistic and isolated. The Society – as a universal apostolic body – needs to give a holistic response: generated, developed and evaluated in collaboration of Provinces and apostolic sectors. The response needs to be inter-provincial and inter-sectoral. If we do so, the body of the Society will become stronger and we will be able to offer a better response to the people we serve.

2. Requirements of integral apostolic responses from the Society

These integral apostolic responses need to fulfill some requirements:

- They have to be built in collaboration of a variety of sectors and ministries.
- They have to include Ignatian values and characteristics.
- They will be developed by each apostolic sector in different ways.

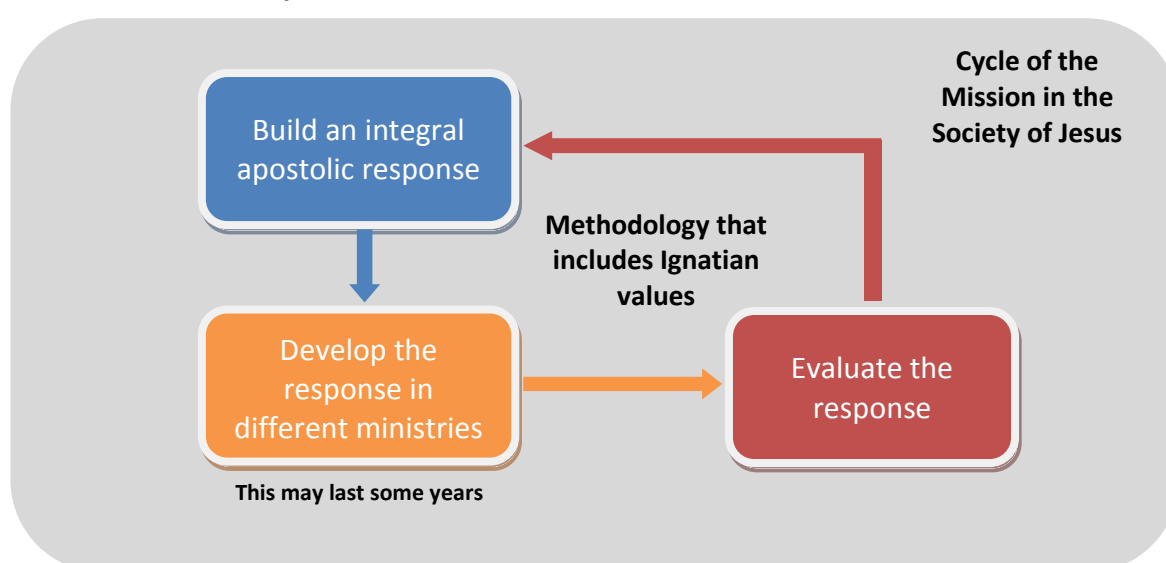
- At the end they have to be evaluated as a set in order to see what has been the impact of the body of the Society in a shared mission.

The way of meeting these requirements is through networks in which different institutions and ministries, sharing the same spirit, cooperate together and offer new and creative responses to these common apostolic challenges.

In order to work in a proper way these networks need a methodology. This is what will be developed in the next pages: a cycle of the mission to which the different sectors and ministries can contribute. A methodology is essential if we want this collaboration among very different institutions happen.

This kind of apostolic responses can be developed at a Provincial, Conference or Global level. And the methodology exposed here can be applied at these different levels.

We show here how this **cycle of the mission** looks like:



We will now try to describe better these three steps, describing the methodology this cycle requires.

3. Build an integral apostolic response

Three main steps are involved in building an integral apostolic response:

- Reach a description of the phenomena we face
- Express our commitment as an apostolic body to that phenomena
- Planning in the different sectors and ministries

We describe each one of these steps:

a) Reach a description of the phenomena: *interior knowledge*

People involved: This exercise will involve people from the academia and people that are serving those suffering the consequences of the phenomena¹. These groups will bring different values that are essential in this description of the reality:

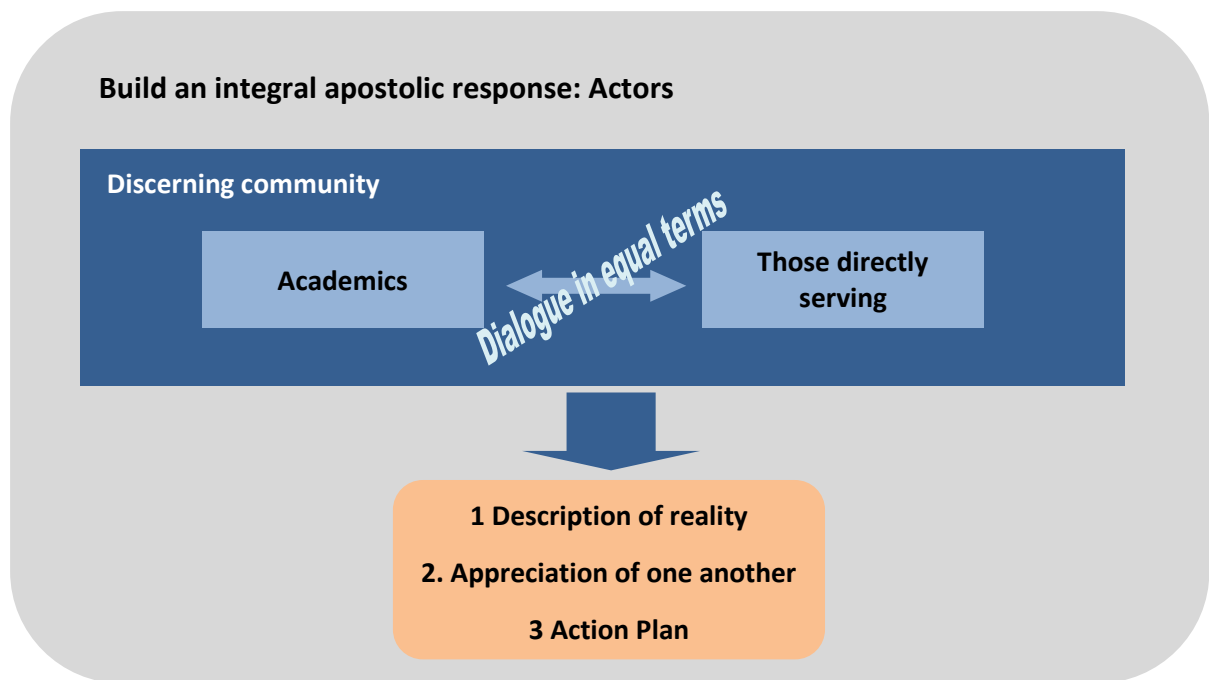
¹ For example, if the phenomena we are trying to face is migration we will call here persons that know about migration and people that are working with migrants in educational, social or pastoral ministries.

Academics bring:

- Scientific rigor
- Holistic considerations
- Knowledge about dynamics and root causes of the phenomena
- Discourses that shape perceptions
- Presence of theologians

Those who are directly serving bring:

- Visions of reality
- Deep intuitions about what is really important
- Moving stories of hope and failure



Characteristics: these two groups need to talk and listen to one another. They both bring a diversity which is essential for the process to be fruitful. They have to fulfill a common task: come out with a description of the phenomena useful for the commitment of the Society. Some important characteristics of that description are:

- Synthetic knowledge, more than analytical one
- From the perspective of those who suffer and looking for their good
- Identifying sources of hope
- Critical with the status quo
- Made in an atmosphere of community discernment that allows people listen to the Spirit that works in the heart of every person

One of the critical concerns here is to be able to look the reality with love, as God looks at it, trying to identify where that God, who works at the bottom of the reality, is working already, in order to collaborate with his action and dynamics.

Product: If these characteristics are met we will reach a description of the phenomena that can be considered a "contemplation of reality" in which we share what Ignatius used to call "interior knowledge" of that reality. In this case, it will be a powerful and strategic Ignatian vision of the phenomena, very useful to share with others.

b) Express the commitment to that phenomena as an apostolic body: *generosity*

Once we have reached the description of the phenomena, and taking into consideration the specific characteristics of the apostolic body, the commitment to the people involved in that phenomena can be expressed.

This is not an automatic response to the description already made. It is a true commitment in which the persons and institutions that will have to respond and must take into consideration the consequences of that commitment. The main Ignatian characteristic involved here is generosity, which needs to be balanced with realism. Generosity has Ignatian indifference and freedom as a required basis. Group indifference needs to be specifically addressed and never be taken for granted.

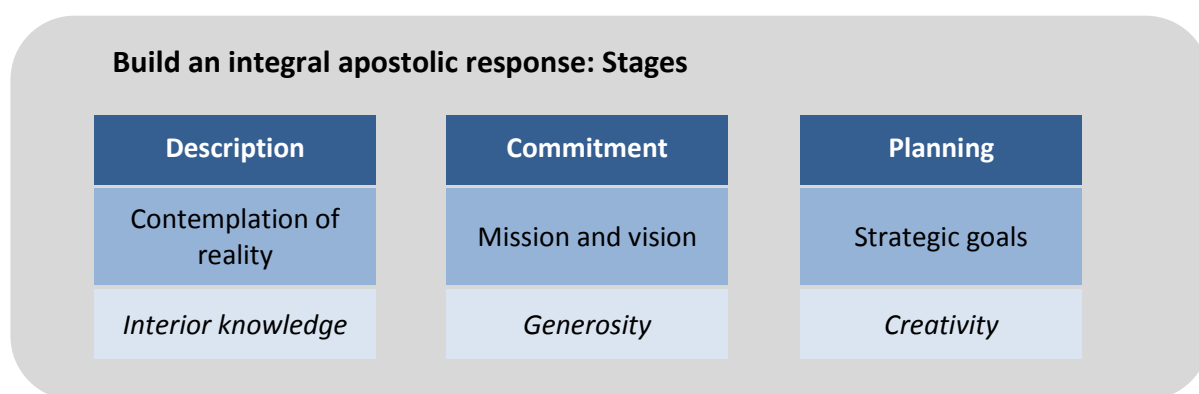
That response is the **mission** the Society commits to regarding that specific phenomenon. It is broad, deep, and open to any ministry, though in different ways in each ministry. It also includes a **vision** of what the Society wants to achieve in this area in a determined period of time.

c) Planning in the different sectors and ministries: *creativity*

This mission has to be expressed in different strategic goals that can help the Society reach the vision defined. This planning should include different dimensions:

- Renovation of the apostolic body in order to respond better to this apostolic challenge
- Service and accompaniment of the victims
- Specific research on the root causes and consequences of this phenomenon: looking at raising public awareness and advocacy initiatives
- Celebrations and cultural activities
- Communication
- Advocacy actions

The main Ignatian characteristic here should be creativity. Creativity always implies to think out of the box, to go beyond common responses, to try to do new things in different ways and to promote new attitudes and new life.



4. Develop the response in the different ministries

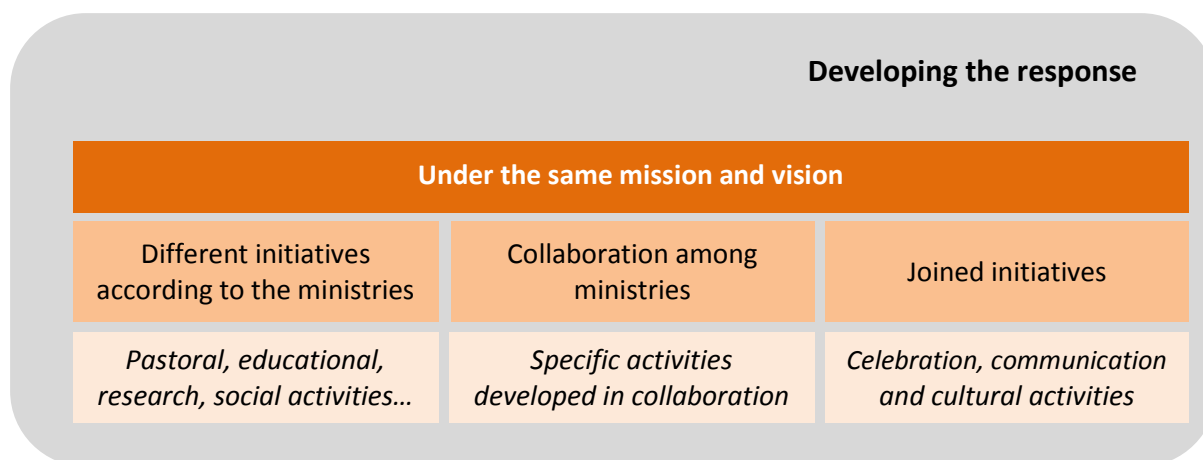
The strategic goals have to be developed through specific initiatives by specific ministries – in terms of education, pastoral, research, communication, service activities etc., – and through general initiatives developed in collaboration between different ministries.

In general, we can say that educational, pastoral, research and advocacy initiatives can be much better addressed by specific sectors: education, pastoral, higher education and social ones. Much more collaboration will be needed in the service and accompaniment of the victims and in organizing celebrations and cultural activities.

These celebrations and cultural activities can nurture lay groups and citizens in order to promote communities based on values of faith and solidarity. Without these groups and citizens no major change for the good of the poor can be reasonably expected.

If we do so, the different ministries of the Society in a particular region will be collaborating together in the same apostolic response, attaining a much stronger sense of belonging to the same body and offering a much better service to the people.

All these contributions are a response to the mission Dei to which all of us is called to contribute.



This response has to be developed in collaboration with other religious and civil institutions that work with the same style or for the same goals.

Part of the success of this kind of response –mainly obtained by the joined initiatives– is to promote groups and communities with a common cultural vision. Then they become factors of change. The service offered through our ministries becomes a cultural resource for social transformation.

A small clarification

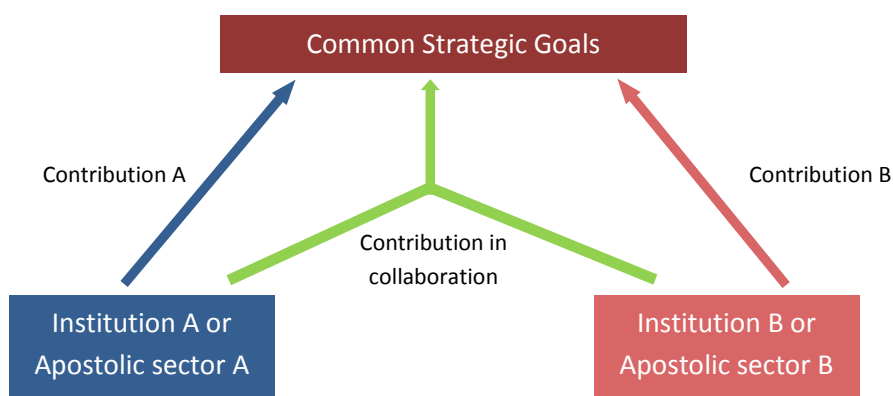
The kind of collaboration that the institutions develop here is strategic collaboration, substantially different from operational collaboration. The following chart may help to see the difference:

Operational collaboration:



This kind of collaboration is established, for instance, when Institution A wants to celebrate a gathering and institution B has a good space that offers it. It is also established in between a social centre and a Higher Education institution when the first one offers a place for research. It functions at the win – win level. If the two institutions are very different in size and resources, this kind of collaboration is difficult.

Strategic collaboration:



Strategic collaboration is established when each institution or apostolic sector offers their own contribution to the same strategic goals. And finally they can also work together in some initiatives. A possible example would be in the case of migration: a parish welcomes a migrant community (contribution A), while a Higher Institution makes a research on it (contribution B). Finally, the two institutions may come together to advocate for that community (contribution in collaboration).

5. Evaluate the response

After some years working in this way a common there will be a need to evaluate what was achieved through this common effort. It is the moment to recover the vision and see how far we reached. There are some areas that should be considered:

- How much were we transformed by the effort? Are we now more committed?
- Did we grow as apostolic body?
- Did the people we serve receive a better response from us?
- Did we promote faith and justice?
- To what extent were we able to raise awareness in the public debate?
- Did we encourage transformative laity and citizenship?

Evaluate the response		
Some areas for evaluation		
Transformation of the apostolic body	Improvement of our faith / justice service	Stronger lay groups and committed citizens
<i>Spiritual situation</i>	<i>Apostolic Service</i>	<i>Collaboration</i>

After finishing the evaluation, we can begin a new cycle of the mission, because the apostolic challenge will probably still be there. Then we will be able to incorporate some lessons we have learnt in the process.

6. Leadership requirements

This entire process of cycle of missions cannot become a reality unless there is a clear leadership that initiates, follows up and evaluates the development of the network. The institutions and sectors involved cannot do that on their own. They need help and guidance in order to reach an agreement and above all must receive a clear mandate from a superior about how to proceed.

We already said that the methodology can be applied at a Provincial, Conference or Global level. Hence, the leadership should be adapted accordingly. This leadership needs to be positioned at a higher level than the institutions or apostolic sectors that will take part. In the case of institutions and sectors in a Province, the leadership should be Provincial; in the case of institutions and sectors from a Conference, it should be at the Conference level from the President; and in the case of a global initiative, it should be at the General's Curia level.

There are two elements required in fulfilling this cycle of mission - a clear leadership from a Superior and a group that discerns. Only when these two groups function, taking their role seriously, the network can take place.

a) Clear leadership of the Superior: he could be a Provincial at the level of a Province or a President at the level of the Conference.

His responsibility would involve:

- Calling persons and institutions to take part in the network
- A very clear guidance and involvement – by himself or by delegation – in the first stage – “building an integral apostolic response”
- Follow up of what is happening in the second stage – “to develop a response” – and facilitate the joint initiatives
- Call for evaluation and define the lessons learnt from the experience
- Ask for a new cycle of mission
- He would require capacities to negotiate and listen, to develop horizontal communication. He should be flexible, inspiring and capable of reaching consensus among different actors.

b) Group that Discerns²: This is the group first of all called by the Superior.

- They will be persons coming from different institutions and sectors who will collectively build an integral response.
- They will also follow up regularly the response that is being offered and solve the possible difficulties that may emerge in the process.
- At the end, the group will also evaluate and look for lessons to be learnt and propose suggestions for the cycle of mission to progress.
- The convener of this group will be the Superior or the person who has been delegated.

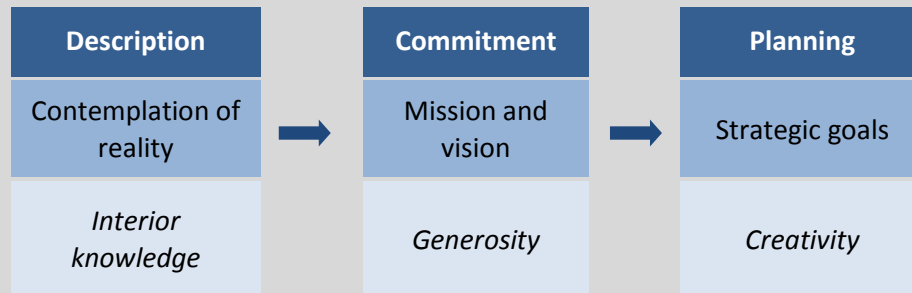
In the following page, we find the whole methodology expressed in a chart.

² Following the opinion of Jorge Cela, this network does not look like a fishing net, but rather like a spider web, where there is a coordination centre that gives direction and coordinates, while keeping a horizontality in the relations among the nodes.

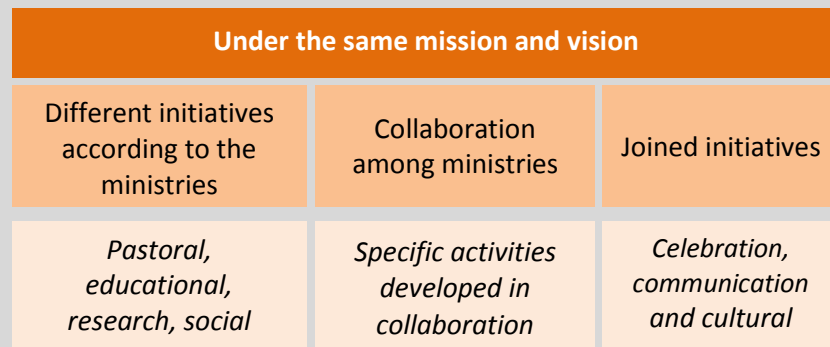
Cycle of the Mission in the Society of Jesus

To be applied at Province, Conference or Global levels

Build an integral apostolic response



Develop the response



Evaluate the response

