

**TOWARDS A
DEEPER RENEWAL**



THE CONGRESS DOCUMENT

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LOYOLA 2022

JUSTICE AND ECOLOGY CONGRESS

CALLED TO CONVERSION

MESSAGE OF THE LOYOLA 2022 JUSTICE AND ECOLOGY CONGRESS

The first ever Justice and Ecology Congress brought together at the birthplace of St Ignatius the social apostolates of the Jesuit provinces of Europe and the Near East to read the signs of our times through the lens of the Holy Trinity contemplating the world. Many people were no longer with us or could not come because of the lingering pandemic, which first cast its shadow across Europe exactly two years ago. Yet there was great joy in being together in our immense diversity not only of nationalities and backgrounds – 153 delegates in person and others online, from 26 countries and hundreds of organisations – but also of states of life: as Jesuits and lay people, men and women, young and old.

The Congress reflected what the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr Arturo Sosa SJ, told us in the opening address: that the mission entrusted to the Jesuits is not owned by the Jesuits but is increasingly shared with collaborators and partners in mission in a spirit of ever deeper collaboration and mutual listening as equals, as befits a synodal Church. In this respect, one of the aims of the Congress was to enable a greater integration of the apostolic body and alignment of all our networks (the Jesuit Refugee Service, the Xavier Network, the Social Centres, the EcoJesuit-Europe Network and the network of social delegates) with the Universal Apostolic Preferences (the UAPs) understood as an inseparable whole.

It was a cannonball in Ignatius's leg that led him back to Loyola to recover, and which triggered his conversion. From such isolated events can flow great historic change. We are conscious that our world, too, is living a cannonball moment. Faced with an ever more alarming climate emergency, mass extinction of species, and a global pandemic that has shattered the world's economies, we arrived in Loyola a month after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in the midst of forced



LOYOLA 2022

JUSTICE AND ECOLOGY CONGRESS

migration on a scale not seen in Europe since the Second World War, and as soaring fuel prices and food shortages push many poor over the brink. What is God, working among us, doing with this moment? What graces of conversion in the midst of this tribulation is God inviting us to receive?

The theme of transformation emerged on the first day: we saw the need for a new way of living and being, one that renounces the fallen human need for control and power, and seeks instead to live in harmony with God, Creation and our fellow creatures, human and nonhuman. Aware in particular of the call Pope Francis makes to us in *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, we expressed a strong desire for change, both in our world and in ourselves – a change that is conscious of our deep roots in our Ignatian tradition which finds hope in the urgency and pain of this moment.

In the presentations and discussions on the climate emergency, we were challenged by the anger, anxiety and fear of the young people who spoke to us, and their conviction that, despite many words and pledges, our society is sleepwalking into a disaster that is already upon us. The expert presentations backed this up: the main driver of ecological destruction is not the rise in population but widening inequity, especially the increase in wealth among the richest. Where will the poor go when large parts of the earth become too hot and humid to sustain human life, and what does that prospect demand of us now? We saw that there can be no way of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) without a radical reset in the way we live, nor any transition without ambitious change that causes pain. And no such conversion will be possible without a profound cultural and political conviction that such a reset can no longer be postponed. For Europe, where an ageing, unequal and complacent society is attached to its culture of wellbeing, this is no small challenge.



LOYOLA 2022

JUSTICE AND ECOLOGY CONGRESS

Even before the return of war to Europe, we were living in a time of mass displacement, brought on by wars, poverty, climate change and ecological emergency. If all the displaced people were a country, it would be the world's fifth largest. Yet rather than face this challenge collaboratively and with determination, as our governments have sought to do in the face of the climate crisis, they continue to run scared of populist movements stoking popular hostility. In all of our nations, governments continue to pursue policies that dehumanise those who come to our shores seeking protection, thus mocking their commitments under international law. We cannot remain silent faced with the continued horror in the Mediterranean, the world's most dangerous migration route, where more than 22,000 have died since 2015. Nor can we be silent in the face of another, yet more hidden horror: the slow death of hope in our brothers and sisters confined for month after month in our cruel detention centres. There, faced with the spiritual violence of a system that seeks to isolate and break them, rendering them invisible, denying their right to live, we meet the sorrowful face of Christ.

Yet we meet there, too, shards of light and sources of consolation. The first source of hope is the resilience of migrants and refugees themselves. Despite losing everything, in their brokenness – in which we find our own reflected – we glimpse what God means us to be. The second is the conversion and transformation that takes place in those who walk with destitute migrants and refugees, opening their homes and hearts to them. As the JRS discovers every day, the welcoming, promoting, protecting and integrating of migrants and refugees takes us to the very heart of the Gospel, opening us to the divine presence among us. This experience leads us now to ask for greater boldness in advocating for refugees. We urge the Church to invite all who can to make room in their homes for the stranger, as so many are doing across Europe for Ukrainians fleeing war. Both Jesuits and lay people present felt challenged by the witness given, in this respect, by many of the Jesuit communities of Europe.



LOYOLA 2022

JUSTICE AND ECOLOGY CONGRESS

Recalling Pope Francis's call in 2015 for every parish and religious community to open their doors to refugees and migrants, we invite our networks to redouble their efforts for the destitute strangers in our midst, and to make use of this experience to help others overcome fears and hesitations. As St Ignatius wrote in his letter to the College of Padova in 1547: "The friendship of the poor makes us friends of the eternal King." We see this call to radical witness, which collides with the political drive to hide and scapegoat migrants, as essential to the proclamation of the Gospel in our time, for it shows to a society marked by fluidity and loneliness the joyful possibility of human community born of a greater "we".

The third hope is the powerful witness of the actions and teachings of Pope Francis and the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Vatican's Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development. In putting this issue at the heart of the Church's witness and proclamation of the Gospel, Pope Francis has challenged the faith-life rupture of too many Catholics who try to make this into a secondary issue. As he says in *Gaudete et Exsultate*, such a separation is not acceptable for a Christian, "for whom the only proper attitude is to stand in the shoes of those brothers and sisters of ours who risk their lives to offer a future to their children."

We heard here in Loyola a concrete invitation, both to our networks and to our church communities: to help our societies urgently to reimagine our idea of the good life through teaching and concrete examples, based on our experience and witness of sustainable living and proximity to the poor. Such a reimagining calls us also to promote and live a relational anthropology in which women and men are understood as being part of nature, in constant interaction with it. This new vision calls us also to reimagine power as service, for the sake of others, to be shared in collaboration, cooperation, and co-responsibility. In this call we saw the inseparable connection between an ecological and a synodal conversion.



LOYOLA 2022

JUSTICE AND ECOLOGY CONGRESS

As a Congress we considered that the challenges of ecology and migration are intertwined justice issues, and need to be better integrated in our witness and in our actions. We need now a prophetic and radical commitment to the ecological crisis of the kind that the JRS has since 1980 given to the challenge of migrants and refugees. In the same way we saw that we cannot separate the call to a synodal conversion from a pastoral, missionary and ecological conversion. We saw the need in the future to develop and understand better these and other justice interconnections, and in turn to tie them explicitly to the four UAPs, which express our Gospel mission today and tell us, in Father General's words. "how we must live in what we do."

Conversion that reflects a different, simpler way of living must begin first with ourselves and our communities and institutions, and we continue to wrestle with our complicity in so many areas that need to change. This is a journey we set out on together, in collaboration, committing ourselves to sharing our spiritual and material resources. The problems we face are complex and small steps are essential as we work in partnership with young people for transformative systemic change. In our encounters with the poor and vulnerable, God's Spirit breaks forth and enables us to act in ways that are beyond our strength. In gratitude and praise for all that God has given us, we draw on the compassion, faith and hope stirred up through our shared work within our networks and communities. We do not despair, but pledge to reflect on all of the above, in the light of Christ's radical call to conversion. And to act.