

Concerning Priorities for the Future of the Japan Province of the Society of Jesus

Foreword

First of all we need to express clearly our deepest gratitude and esteem for the work and prayers of our forebears who served God and humanity in the Japan Province of the Society of Jesus. Clearly, that activity for which they gave their whole life as Jesuits has borne much fruit and has contributed greatly to Japanese society.

The basic mission of the Japan Province of the Society of Jesus is evangelization. In order to achieve this evangelization, based on the decrees of recent General Congregations, the missions we must give importance to are: promoting inculturation in the context of contemporary society, furthering collaboration with more and more people in interreligious dialogue, including people with no religion, and furthering collaboration beyond province boundaries.

The Committee for Ministry Priorities held repeated meetings, opinions were solicited from all members of the province in 2013 and again from the assembly of younger members of the province on December 26, 2014, and there was open discussion in the Province Congregation on May 5, 2015. As a result of calm analysis and judgment, I have determined the following three priorities of province policy for the next 10 years. The aim of this determination is to concentrate on assigning suitable Jesuits to these priorities and to invest province funds accordingly. There is no priority of rank among the three priorities.

1. When we look at the intellectual situation of Japan, the apostolate in which the Society of Jesus can serve Japanese society and the Church most effectively is theological research and education so as to impart the gospel of God's kingdom proclaimed by Jesus. For this reason, *the theological apostolate* is an apostolic priority for the province. Concretely, in order to serve the whole Church of Japan, we should further strengthen theological research through collaboration with others both within Japan and abroad, and contribute to formation of our scholastics and other religious and the faithful so that they may engage in human formation based on gospel values.
2. In contemporary Japan, service of people's inner spiritual dimension is indispensable. For this reason, *the spiritual apostolate* is a priority. Grounded in the Spiritual Exercises, we should promote research and implementation which envision a spirituality useful for the spiritual growth of people today and a spirituality nourished by Eastern traditions. Concretely, our spirituality centers should be further enlivened and we should contribute to the formation of people who will be able to give spiritual direction.
3. In the world in which Japan is situated, especially from the point of view of the politics and economics of Asia, the social apostolate is indispensable for promoting justice and serving the environment. For this reason, *the social apostolate* is a priority. Concretely, based on the policies of the Holy Father, the Japan Bishops' Conference, and the Society of Jesus, we should promote worldwide networks, and while making our voice heard in solidarity with our collaborators and many others concerning such issues as the environment, nuclear power plants, awareness of history, working for peace, and the problem of poverty, we should serve research and education so as to answer the frontline needs of the world and Japan. Concerning this area, in the Asia Pacific Conference we are promoting solidarity at various levels. For example, we are actively encouraging the Society's work in East Timor and are promoting collaboration between the Provinces of Japan and Korea.

Some policies regarding implementation:

—All Jesuits, in our current parish apostolate and educational apostolate, should bring these three priorities to bear adequately on their work.

—When carrying out these priorities, we should always have an eye to partnership on an equal footing with lay people and our collaborators.

—We should discuss and implement programs and financial support especially to form the leadership needed for the next generation of lay people.

—While promoting vocations within Japan, we should also continue to ask other provinces to send missionaries to the Japan Province.

The above are the province priorities.

As we set about implementing our province policy, the whole of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* is full of meaning, but especially the following passages offer valuable hints:

I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. "Mere administration" can no longer be enough. Throughout the world let us be "permanently in a state of mission." (25)

I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory. (33)

Regarding the theological apostolate

A theology—and not simply a pastoral theology—which is in dialogue with other sciences and human experiences is most important for our discernment on how best to bring the Gospel message to different cultural contexts and groups. (133)

Regarding the spiritual apostolate

Today more than ever we need men and women who, on the basis of their experience of accompanying others, are familiar with processes which call for prudence, understanding, patience and docility to the Spirit. (171)

Regarding the social apostolate

*An authentic faith—which is never comfortable or completely personal—always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave the earth somehow better than we found it. (183) (Cf. also *Laudato Si'*)*

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