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Reflections on Renewal in the Jesuit Apostolate of Education in the Philippines Over the Last Decade

BIENVENIDO F. NEBRES, S.J.

The last decade has been one of rapid change for the Society of Jesus and its work in the Philippines today. This is not surprising in view of the immense changes in the Church and in the world. On the forces transforming the Society of Jesus today, Fr. Karl Rahner writes:

The third moving force is the Church itself in its own present state of change. Probably these changes were held back for too long. Maybe it was thought that a close holding to the past was a Christian virtue and spelled salvation for a threatened world. At any rate, change now comes about abruptly and brings with it all those uncertainties and dangers which arise when something essential has been passed by and must now be hastily recovered.¹

Not surprisingly, the challenge (and pains) of change has been most felt in that apostolate most identified with Jesuits in the Philippines: Jesuit schools. As the apostolate most deeply imbedded in the institutions, both secular and ecclesial, of the past, it must necessarily feel every twist and pull of a changing society and a changing Church. This essay is an effort at a review of the experience of change in Jesuit schools in the Philippines over the last decade. The paper divides into three parts: first, the wider context of change in the understanding of Jesuit mission and the Jesuit apostolate in education; second, the response to this challenge of change for Jesuit education in the Philippines, in particular at the Ateneo de Manila; third, a review and analysis of the efforts at response.

1. Karl Rahner, S.J., "The Jesuits and the Future on the Anniversary of an Historical Event," — an essay written in 1973 on the 200th anniversary of the suppression of the Society of Jesus.

THE INTERNATIONAL JESUIT CONTEXT.

There are certain key events and documents, which we may regard as points of reference towards the understanding of Jesuit efforts to renew the apostolate in education. First, the often-quoted 31 July 1973, allocution of Fr. Arrupe entitled "Men-For-Others." Second, the thirty-second General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (December 1974 to March 1975), in particular the documents "Jesuits Today" and "Our Mission Today." Third, the meeting called by Fr. Arrupe in August 1975 for Jesuit Directors of Higher Education in order to review the apostolate in higher education in the light of the 32nd General Congregation. Most recently, the September 1980 consultation in Rome among representatives of Jesuit Secondary Education.

A Changed World and a Changed Awareness. The opening lines of the allocution "Men-For-Others" set the basic motif: "Education for justice has become in recent years one of the chief concerns of the Church. Why? Because there is a new awareness in the Church that participation in the promotion of justice and the liberation of the oppressed is a constitutive element of the mission which Our Lord has entrusted to her."² This developed into the major theme of the 32nd General Congregation's reformulation of the Jesuit Mission Today: "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement." In the August 1975 meeting of Jesuit Directors of Higher Education in Rome, Fr. Vincent O'Keefe, S.J., explained the context of this reformulation by asking us to reflect on the following significant developments in the world and in the Society of Jesus:

1. World population has increased by some 600 million people since 1966.
2. A decline in belief in God along with a growing awareness of the pervasiveness of social injustice is apparent in many parts of the world.
3. The inadequacy of a mere extension of present school systems in order to offer at least minimal educational opportunities to the masses is acknowledged by all.
4. More and more attention in the educational, as well as in other fields is being called to the needs of the poorest of the poor.

2. Pedro N. Arrupe, S.J., *Men for Others* (Jesuit Secondary Education Association, March, 1974), p. 1.

5. The Church has stated clearly that the promotion of justice is an integral part of all evangelization.
6. It is generally recognized now that people's values and value systems, including the young especially, are shaped at least as much outside of school as within.
7. The number of Jesuits has declined in almost all countries, while our average age has perceptibly risen.³

These world-wide developments were clearly mirrored in the concerns expressed by Jesuits through the requests presented to the 32nd General Congregation:

1. A need to reaffirm the importance of the educational apostolate. Some were concerned that an insistence on social commitment and on other more direct or rewarding forms of apostolic service might jeopardize traditional commitment to educational activities.
2. A need to reaffirm the specific religious contribution in the educational field. There was a desire to place Jesuit educational involvement, particularly (although not exclusively) institutional involvement, within the over-all context of the Jesuit religious, apostolic, and sacerdotal vocation.
3. A need to place the educational apostolate in the present social context, with special reference to the promotion of justice. This would stress the need to help people to develop a critical sense and approach and those values that can help to make our world more just.
4. A need to serve the poor by preference. In view of today's social context of wide-spread inequality in the distribution of material and other goods and in the means of acquiring them, and in view of the evangelical preference for the poor and the oppressed, they should be a preferential group in the Jesuit educational apostolate.
5. A specific Jesuit contribution. In view of the Ignatian criteria for the selection of ministries, Jesuit tradition, and Jesuit formation, the educational effort should concentrate on groups or areas which can have a wider impact, a multiplying effect.
6. A need to work in alliance with others through dialogue

3. Vincent O'Keefe, S.J., "The Apostolate of Education in the Light of the 32nd General Congregation," in the *Final Report on Meeting of Jesuit Academic Directors of Institutions of Higher Education* (August 5-8, 1975), pp. 60-61.

and collaboration, not only in educational institutions but in the field of social communications and educational research and innovation.⁴

A New Response. Two major areas of work have emerged in the effort of Jesuit schools to respond to the above developments: the specific application of the Jesuit Mission Today, the service of faith and promotion of justice, in the educational apostolate; and collaboration with lay faculty members and lay administrators in Jesuit schools.

The first area emerges very strongly from the earliest documents. The allocution "Men-For-Others" speaks of the formation of "men completely convinced that love of God which does not issue in justice for men is a farce."⁵ The concrete challenges that Fr. Arrupe presents at the end of his talk are aimed to concretize what the task of promotion of justice might mean: developing a simpler lifestyle, not profiting from unjust structures, seeking to change unjust structures. While the document on "Jesuit Mission Today" did not take up the educational apostolate in particular, it presents the challenge of a more decisive involvement in the world, a challenge which is most demanding of the work in education.

Too often we are insulated from any real contact with unbelief and with the hard, everyday consequences of injustice and oppression. As a result, we run the risk of not being able to hear the cry for the Gospel as it is addressed to us by the men and women of our time.⁶

This challenge of a more decisive involvement is taken up by Fr. Jean-Yves Calvez, General Assistant, in a paper given at the August 1975 Rome conference. He says that a necessary *a priori*, before a proper response can be made to the demands of the service of faith and the promotion of justice is: "Abolish the distances which separate us from many people, grow closer to them, place ourselves in their midst, know them better in their concrete lives and in their profound aspirations."⁷

The second area of Jesuit-lay collaboration appears in the 1975 Rome conference, but has only been recently developed and worked on. It emerges as a major theme and concern in the 1980 Seminar on Jesuit Secondary Education in Rome. Fr. Arrupe

4. Ibid., pp. 61-62.

5. Arrupe, *Men for Others*, p. 1.

6. "Our Mission Today," Decree 4 of the 32nd General Congregation, no. 35.

7. Jean-Yves Calvez, S.J., "Abolish the Distances which Separate Jesuits from Too Many People," in the *Final Report on Meeting of Jesuit Academic Directors of Institutions of Higher Education*, p. 90.

develops this concern both in his opening address on September 10 and in his closing allocution on September 13.

The call of the Church and of the Society of Jesus, and the contribution that lay people can make to our schools, all lead to the same conclusion: There can be no question of *whether* there should be collaboration — genuine collaboration — with the laity. There is only a question of *how* this collaboration can best be accomplished, how it can be most effective. All that we have, we must share: our vision, our spirituality, our tradition, our expertise, our four hundred years of experience, our international structure — and our responsibility.

But . . . we must remind ourselves that collaboration is not one-sided. We do not simply give something to others so they can help us to do what we would like to be able to do by ourselves! Collaboration does not mean that we set about creating “mini-Jesuits” or some sort of “Third Order of Jesuits.” Collaboration means that we give — but also that we receive. . . . we also are instructed: we learn. We learn from the expertise, the vision, the experience, and also from the spirituality of the lay people who work with us.⁸

THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT: DIRECTIONS AND EFFORTS.

Jesuit Mission Today to the Educational Apostolate. Aside from numerous efforts to reflect on and echo the call of the 32nd General Congregation, there are two particular events that are central to our understanding of the efforts at redirections in the Philippines: the Province Congress of April 1973 (which antedated the 32nd General Congregation), and the Educational Policy Paper drafted June-July 1975 and promulgated November 1975.

The Province Congress of April 1973 was a month-long effort involving over 100 Jesuits to discern the signs of the times and to set directions for the apostolate of the Jesuits in the Philippines. These new directions were set forth in five propositions approved by the Congress:⁹

Proposition I The principal task of our priestly and Jesuit service to the Church and our people at this time is, in collaboration with others, witnessing to justice and serving the poor, following the indication of the synod that “action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully

8. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., Opening Address at the Seminar on Jesuit Secondary Education (Rome: September 10-13, 1980).

9. Documents of the Province Congress of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus, April, 1972.

appears to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.”

Proposition II We will take the necessary means, both individually and corporately, to make our lives as religious a witness to justice.

Proposition III We will develop and employ all our resources in such a way as to contribute as much as possible to our corporate task of witnessing to justice and serving the poor.

Proposition IV The order of priority of our ministries will be established — and whenever necessary revised — on the basis of their effectiveness in witnessing to justice and serving the poor.

Proposition V Under the leadership of our superiors, we will cooperate with each other and with others, and coordinate all our ministries, in such a way as to enhance the effectiveness of our witness to justice and service of the poor.

Not surprisingly, these propositions were not easily accepted by all. In a letter of 31 July 1973, the Provincial, Fr. Benigno A. Mayo, S.J., wrote:

Several of those who commented on the propositions suggest a “softening” of the expression “the principal . . .”, for the purpose of not seeming too exclusive or to “downgrade” other tasks. But here I must recall that my primary purpose in calling the Congress was to obtain its help in establishing priorities for our use of manpower and other resources. And a priority does by its nature involve some form of ranking. We do not want the Congress propositions to become one great circus tent under which any number of acts can be accommodated indiscriminately. . . . Our choice of a particular task among the various works to be done at this time may be somewhat analogous to the effort of the Society in its early days to “defend the Church in Europe and promote the Catholic Reform.”¹⁰

It was not till two years later, after the 32nd General Congregation in Rome, that an effort was made to formulate a specific strategy for implementing in the schools the principal corporate task accepted in the Province Congress of 1973. By then, the formulation of the Congregation — “the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement,” — had become the

10. Benigno A. Mayo, S.J., “Letter to the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus,” July 31, 1973.

official statement of new directions. This effort at a specific strategy (which resulted in the Educational Policy Paper of November 1975) was born of a much more immediate task: the resolution of the controversy regarding the relocation of the Ateneo Graduate School of Business in Makati. The committee called to review the question decided that the relocation plans could not be detached from the general review of Jesuit apostolates called for by the 32nd General Congregation. Thus, the policy paper's effort to present more concrete goals for the educational apostolate. The basic theses of the paper may be simply stated:

First, the promotion of justice in the world of today demands effective action to reform or remove unjust social structures.

Second, there is in the Philippines a principal structural injustice which must be the primary focus of our efforts: the concentration of wealth, power, and access to quality education and public services in one small segment of the population, while the vast majority are deprived of the material and spiritual resources necessary for human development.

Third, it is hardly likely that those on top of this structure, its principal beneficiaries, will change it of their own accord. They must be helped to do so by organized pressure from below.

Fourth, Jesuit schools should then commit themselves to a dual strategy. Primarily, to form trained and dedicated leaders who will help the poor organize themselves into self-reliant communities able and willing to defend and promote their own interests. Secondly, in order that the intended reform of unjust social structures may be radical and yet exclude violent revolution, to develop leaders at the top who are genuinely responsive to and effectively supportive of the aspirations of the masses.¹¹

Concrete Programs of Response. What might it mean to implement the above dual strategy in a school? The Office of Social Concern and Involvement (OSCI) was established at the Ateneo de Manila College in the summer of 1975. Its establishment was preceded by intense discussions and work among some Jesuits and staffers of the SPES Institute dating back a year or so. In particular, much of its concrete inspiration derived from the experience of the Ateneo *Sarilikha*, an organization of Ateneo students, originating in the experience of helping farmers after the disastrous floods of 1972. This is not the place to go into a detailed description of the programs of the OSCI. (There are reasonably

11. Policy Paper on the Educational Apostolate of the Philippine Province, November 5, 1975. This is a paraphrase of relevant sections of the summary statement.

detailed descriptions in several of the references given at the end.). But what is the philosophy and what are the directions of the programs? They recognize that the new challenges posed by the 32nd General Congregation and by the Policy Paper on Education call for an *awareness* of the social situation and *contact* with the poor. The first step, therefore, was to respond to the call issued by Fr. Calvez: "Abolish the distances that separate us from so many people." (Or as the slogan of the Ateneo College Sanggunian of one year put it: *Alisin ang puwing sa mata ng agila.*) Thus, there were programs of contact: exposure, immersion, summer workcamp; and complementary programs of analysis and reflection: General Orientation Seminar, Post-Immersion or Post-Workcamp analysis. Later on, an obligatory Freshman Orientation program (one day of group-building and a second day of consciousness-raising) was started. These may be seen as programs of *initiation* into a new awareness and into new commitments. Beyond them, are programs of continuing commitment; work and participation in organizations dedicated to working among the poor and to the formation of members towards service for others.

While the programs of the Ateneo college OSCI have been around the longest and have been most studied and analyzed, there are many other important efforts to respond to the new challenges. For example, the *Tulong-Dunong* program at the Ateneo de Manila High School, which involves seniors in tutorials among poor public grade school students in Metro-Manila. Offices similar to the OSCI and programs of awareness and contact have been growing in the other Ateneos, notably at the Ateneo de Davao under Fr Esguerra, at Xavier University and at the Ateneo de Naga.

How have these efforts fared relative to the dual strategy proposed by the Education Policy Paper: the formation of leaders to help in organization from below, and of responsive leaders at the top? The fairest assessment perhaps would be that they give promise and hope, but that we still have a long way to go. At the Ateneo de Manila College, these efforts have made social consciousness and being-for-others acceptable, perhaps even fashionable. They have also created a counterculture (with all the pros and cons that a counterculture brings). This counterculture may be seen most sharply in the formation of a coalition of student organizations (the Socially Oriented Activities or SOA) and in the

seven-point manifesto issued by its leaders in March 1980. In that manifesto, they tried to define what being a man-for-others meant for them.

1. He is *aware* of the structural problems of society. He feels and is concerned about the situation of our country in all its aspects: societal, political, economic, cultural, educational, and religious.
2. He *acts* to help bring about structures of justice in society.
3. He is in *solidarity* with the poor by being among them and by acting together with them to bring about their full human development.
4. His solidarity is *from the heart*. He serves with *fidelity* and in a *spirit of humility*.
5. He strives for a *simple lifestyle*.
6. He is part of a *community* that continually seeks renewal.
7. *Christ* is the *center* of his life. Christ is the foundation and goal of his commitment to *personal and societal renewal*.

Being a man-for-others for them means a profound renewal: personal, communitarian, societal.¹²

This counterculture has naturally continued beyond graduation. Graduates continue to meet to share experiences, hopes and dreams, and to give support to one another. A program of Jesuit volunteers (JVP) is in its second year: graduates from the Ateneos (and other schools), who are willing to dedicate a year or more to assisting in various Jesuit apostolates. Efforts continue to provide support and linkage for the Ateneans who seek ways and means of living up to their commitment of living for others.

Formative Aspects of the Curriculum. Many of the efforts described above are extra-curricular or co-curricular. There is now an intensifying effort to think through the formative aspects of curriculum (beyond its transmission of skills). Most important are the efforts to renew the philosophy and theology programs in Jesuit schools and to engage in intensive faculty development programs in these crucial areas. The question of value-formation, especially in grade school and high school, and its implications for the teaching of religion, are also being studied. In time, the hope is that the challenge of the service of faith and the promotion of justice will inform the central educational process: curriculum and classroom.

12. "Ang Bagong Atenista: Tao-Para-SaKapwa" (Manifesto of the Ateneo Socially-Oriented Students, March 29, 1980). This is a free translation of the Tagalog original.

Jesuit-Lay Collaboration. As pointed out earlier, while this theme and need emerged from the very beginning of discussions regarding renewal of Jesuit educational apostolate, systematic efforts are fairly recent. The most promising development is the *Colloquium on the Ministry of Teaching*. The Colloquium was introduced to the Philippines in the summer of 1980 in a seminar held in Baguio City for administrators and teachers of Jesuit schools from all over Asia. What does it do? "It offers to teachers of Catholic schools a chance to reflect together on the things in their teaching lives that matter most to them."¹³ It is born in great part of the need for Jesuit-lay collaboration urged by Fr. Arrupe in his September 1980 address to Jesuit secondary school administrators. What is it?

"The Colloquium on the Ministry of Teaching" is . . . based on an idea developed for American Jesuit schools and adapted for the Philippines. For 2½ days, faculty members of Philippine Catholic schools, meeting in peaceful surroundings, can take a quiet look together at their teaching as a ministry of the Church. It is not a retreat, unless withdrawal from work and home for a few days constitutes a retreat. It is not a seminar, nor a workshop. Rather it is a shared experience; groups of teachers talking about the meaning of their work. The enrichment that this experience can bring them will, it is hoped, encourage teachers to continue to share their insights and problems with one another in some regular way long after the Colloquium is over.¹⁴

Collaboration demands ultimately some form of community. And as Fr. Michael Buckley stresses in his thought-provoking essay on Jesuit community, community is based on communication — communication (beyond the weather and sports) about what is most meaningful to us. The Colloquium is an initiation into this deeper communication and thus an initiation into transforming a scattered faculty into a community of service and faith.

The first colloquia were held during the school year 1980-81. More intensive efforts are planned for 1981-82.

REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

It is too early to make an assessment of the "Colloquium on the Ministry of Teaching." There have been, however, several efforts at a review of the programs to implement the Jesuit mission today. These efforts of assessment come to a common conclusion: the

13. The Colloquium on the Ministry of Teaching (*Mimeographed Information Sheet*).

14. *Ibid.*

programs are having impact, primarily on the level of awareness. But much still has to be done.

Assessment of Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the Philippines. For the January 1980 meeting of Jesuit superiors and directors of work, a study was made of work being done in Jesuit colleges and universities towards the service of faith and promotion of justice. The assessment reviewed objectives, administration, faculty, students, formation (curricular and extracurricular). The final assessment concludes:

A certain pattern can be discerned in the responses to the various types of questions. Questions on the level of goals/desires (e.g., are the objectives of the school relevant) or of the type "are there programs . . ." generally get more responses and more positive responses. On the other hand, questions which ask *what* is being done or *what impact* have programs had, get few and generally more negative responses. The most obvious interpretation of this phenomenon is that there is enough awareness among the respondents that *there is* a new thrust towards justice and faith and that the Ateneos *would like* to do something about this thrust. But the respondents are not clear about what this thrust means *in the concrete*, not clear about *what is being actually done* about it, or what difference it is supposed to make in the life of the school (impact).¹⁵

Studies of Ateneo de Manila Programs. Three M.A. theses have been written on programs of social concern at the Ateneo de Manila College. Edna Hernandez explored the attitudes of social concern among college students at the Ateneo. Specifically, she tried to compare the attitudes of social concern between scholars of the Ateneo Scholarship Foundation (ASF) and non-ASF scholars. Her study also tried to find out whether the length of stay in the university and sex had any effect on attitudes. Her thesis concludes:

Data from the study showed that the Ateneo thrust of formation of men-for-others or of a man who is socially concerned had positive effects on students' attitudes of social concern and seemed to be in the direction of Ateneo's policies. The study could serve as a motivation for the University to continue the ongoing programs that meet the objectives of formation of men-for-others.¹⁶

15. Committee on Higher Education, "Assessment of Jesuit Colleges and Universities" (Read at the Jesuit Consultation on Ministries, Angono, Rizal: January 13-19, 1980), p. 9.

16. Edna Hernandez, "Attitudes of Social Concern Among College Students: an Exploratory Study" (Masteral Thesis, Ateneo de Manila University, 1979), p. 59.

Cecile Rivilla wrote a thesis studying attitude change, persistence of induced attitudes, and supportive environments, using Ateneo Freshmen involved in the Freshman Orientation Program as subjects. The study has been most helpful in our understanding of the process of reinforcement, and of source credibility, in the effort to achieve attitude change.

Finally, Patricia Martin's thesis studied the impact of various social concern programs on a select group of fifty-five socially involved students. It sought to find out

what factors influenced their participation in socially-oriented activities, what conflicts they faced as a result of such participation, what they understand by a simple lifestyle, how their personal lifestyles are affected, and lastly, what their aspirations are with regard to social involvement and what the possible obstacles to these aspirations may be.¹⁷

A study made by some college students regarding attitudes of students towards the Ateneo Immersion program may also be of interest.¹⁸ Finally, there is the survey on the teaching of theology at the Ateneo de Manila (First Semester 1979) and the analysis made by Fr. Joseph Roche for the third volume of the *Budhi Papers*.¹⁹ The impact of theology courses on the students' efforts to unite the twin goals of service of faith and promotion of justice is carefully studied. It is difficult to give a summary of the carefully nuanced analysis here. But the questionnaire and the analysis are worth reflecting on in continuing efforts to bring the goals of service of faith and promotion of justice into the mainstream of classroom curriculum.

EPILOGUE

It should be clear to the *cognoscentes* that the above reflections have a highly personal aspect. The author was involved to a greater or lesser degree in most of the efforts and studies mentioned above. This is why the paper is entitled "reflections" rather than "study." A more careful study still has to be made of directions and efforts of Jesuit schools in the Philippines to serve the faith and to promote justice. But this paper actually had another purpose: it has

17. Patricia Martin, "Inducements, Conflicts and Choices Affecting Groups of Socially Involved College Students" (Masteral Thesis, Ateneo de Manila University, 1980), p. 117.

18. Ernesto Hizon and Rosalinda Noriega, "Study on Attitudes Towards Immersion Program," 1979.

19. Joseph L. Roche, S.J., "College Theology in a Filipino Catholic School," *Budhi Papers III* (Ateneo de Manila University: The Department of Theology, 1979), pp. 45-64.

tried to gather together a reasonable list of references on the re-orientation of the Jesuit apostolate of education in the Philippines, and to provide some historical context to these references. Over the last year, many Jesuits at the Ateneo de Manila have been besieged by requests for interviews regarding the reorientation of Jesuit education. If nothing else, this essay might serve as a convenient handout to such interviewers. It is to be hoped that it will help give a start to the greater challenge of assessing "where we are" with respect to the call of faith and justice. And knowing where we are, to engage even more fully, "under the standard of the Cross, in the crucial struggle of our time: the struggle for faith and that struggle for justice which it includes."

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