

## **LETTER TO FR. PEDRO ARRUPE, ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF DECREE 4 OF GENERAL CONGREGATION XXXII**

Dear Fr. Arrupe,

A group of Jesuits and friends — laywomen and laymen — who share in the mission of the Society of Jesus in Spain are writing you this letter. A union and collaboration that you, as Father General, so greatly valued and promoted. We never knew you personally, and yet you are someone very close and dear to us. So familiar, in fact, that feeling you already in the nearness of God, we will speak to you with the simplicity and trust that Ignatius taught us, "as one friend speaks to another."

### **Decree 4 of GC XXXII**

After a year in which we have reread, reflected on, and celebrated Decree 4 of GC XXXII, fifty years after its promulgation, we wish to express our profound gratitude. It is true that the decree was the work of the General Congregation, the highest authority of the Society. But how would it have been possible without the spirit you had breathed into so many social initiatives and commitments in previous years, and without your clear public statements in favor of a commitment to justice?

We believe that the Society's option for the service of faith and the promotion of justice has very deep roots in you. We have heard so many times about your life in Japan. Is it not true that the two poles — faith and justice — are rooted in that personal experience of yours? On one hand, in your "incredible Japan" you lived the passion for proclaiming the faith, and also its difficulties. And on the other, "I lived through the atomic bomb" was your testimony of the direct experience of one of the greatest horrors and sufferings of our time. Yes, a passion for God and a passion for people who suffer in an unjust world.

It is no surprise that even before GC XXXII, you transmitted to the Society the passion for the Kingdom of God — a kingdom of justice. How many times have we recalled and celebrated your speech in Valencia to the Alumni of our schools! There you set out clearly and with parrhesia the direction that Ignatian formation and spirituality must point: "the type of person we must form, the type of person we must become, the man for others" — men and women for others.

### **The novelty of the decree**

With your experience and spiritual wisdom, you helped us understand that the service of faith and the struggle for justice do not merely go hand in hand, but interpenetrate one another. Justice is found in the very heart of our faith and our relationship with God; and God is found at the heart of our commitment to justice. This is an extension of that ideal instilled in Jesuits from the novitiate: "Loving Him in all things and all things in Him." Moreover, you made it very clear that the faith-justice option was not limited to the field of social action — as important and indispensable as that is — but that it must permeate all the activities of the Society, as well as personal and community life, and even its institutions. And so Decree 4 reflected this (4:74).

For this reason, among the many images preserved from your life, there are two that can summarize what your message and legacy have meant to us — so cherished and inspiring: a photograph of you kneeling in silent contemplation of God, and another of you kneeling to shine the shoes of a shoeshine boy. Two aspects of your life and message, inseparably united: faith and justice, God and the poor.

### **Paying a price**

It is true that such a radical option was bound to give rise to tensions and conflicts in a society so marked by injustice. And you warned us of this insistently, as did the General Congregation itself: "We will not work for the promotion of justice without paying a price" (GC 32, 4:46). You experienced this firsthand as you watched people close and dear to you distance themselves from you and from the Society; you endured painful misunderstandings from Jesuits and from others within the Church. But now, you can share in the joy of the Lord alongside fellow Jesuits who gave their lives for an evangelical justice in different parts of the

world. How you must rejoice in that evangelical blessedness of those persecuted for the sake of justice, alongside dear companions such as our close friends Lluís Espinal, Vicente Cañas, Ignacio Ellacuría and his companions, and so many, many others!

### **To the very end**

GC XXXII (d. 4:53–56) had already pointed to the importance of inculturating the Christian message according to different countries and cultures. And you confirmed with a significant document and your own practice what the Congregation had only begun to sketch. So you were not only present at the birth of what would become Decree 4, but you continued to inspire its development — one of the most notable apostolic initiatives of the modern Society.

And, to the very end of your strength, you never stopped promoting and encouraging commitment to justice, with a keen sensitivity for detecting the most urgent needs of the moment. The stroke that definitively removed you from the exercise of Superior General occurred precisely upon your return from a meeting about the nascent refugee service, in Bangkok. And the Jesuit Refugee Service is one of the most valuable treasures of the legacy you left us — tragically, as urgent today as ever.

### **Social radicality and depth of faith**

Always with the *magis* as your guiding star, you never put a limit on initiatives of social commitment, even the most daring. But, not wanting us to be shallow or complacent in that commitment, you led us to the very depths of the option for faith that justice implies. You brought us to the heart of the Christian experience. In the last of your great conferences, "*Rooted and Grounded in Charity*," you declared: "true justice is born of charity and finds its fullness in charity" — a charity that is the fullness of the love the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts. Already in the Valencia address you had said:

*"Only the man of God, the 'spiritual' man [the woman of God, the spiritual woman], in the sense of being led by the Spirit, can ultimately be the man for others, the man for justice, capable of contributing to a true transformation of the world, one that progressively eliminates from it the structures of sin."*

Finally, as if wishing to leave this theological dimension of the faith-justice option firmly established, it was at that same Bangkok meeting — your last — where you made that stirring appeal, your "swan song": "*Please, be brave! I will tell you one thing. Do not forget it. Pray, pray a great deal!*"

### **Reasons to live and to hope**

Dear friend, Pedro, throughout this year we have been remembering you with gratitude as we made our way through the pages of Decree 4. But there are so many of your insights and calls that continue to resonate among us! For example: communal discernment, the sense of mission, the refugee service, availability, the union of contemplation and action, the call to the frontiers — and above all, love for Jesus Christ, poor and humble, our "model." There are words from Vatican II that once surprised us, and which you brought to life through your witness, your words, and your evangelical spirit: "*The future of humanity is in the hands of those who are capable of providing the generations to come with reasons for living and reasons for hoping*" (Gaudium et Spes 31). Yes, you have left us this legacy, still so necessary in our world today: reasons to live and reasons to hope. And for our part, with great trust in God, we will continue to strive with all our effort to make your legacy fruitful in our time.

Thanks be to God for all that you have transmitted to us through your life and leadership. Thanks be to God, because you are the exact and compelling image of the "man of God" and "man for others" that you described so well for us.

Thank you, with all our hearts, Father Arrupe — friend, brother.

*Jesuits and friends in mission of the Society of Jesus in Spain. Loyola, 18 April 2026*