

GC 35, Decree 2

A Fire that Kindles Other Fires

It is from Ignatius's encounter with the Lord at La Storta that the future life of service and mission of the companions emerges in its characteristic contours...

To follow Christ bearing his Cross means opening ourselves with him to every thirst that afflicts humanity today. Christ is nourishment itself, the answer to every hunger and thirst...He is the water of life, the living water of which he spoke to the Samaritan woman...someone with which his custom forbade him to speak at all. Jesus, in his outreach, embraced difference and new horizons.

His ministry transcended boundaries. He invited his disciples to be aware of God's action in places and people they were inclined to avoid: Zacheus, the Syro-Phoenician woman, Roman centurions, a repentant thief.

This image of living water can give life to all Jesuits as servants of Christ in his mission because, having tasted this water themselves, they will be eager to offer it to anyone who thirsts, and to reach out to people beyond frontiers...

To follow Christ bearing his Cross means announcing his Gospel of hope to the many poor who inhabit our world today. The world's many 'poverties' represent thirst that, ultimately, only he who is living water can assuage. Working for his Reign will often mean meeting material needs, but it will always mean much more, because human beings thirst at many levels.

Faith and justice; it is never one without the other. Human beings need food, shelter, love, relationship, truth, meaning, promise, hope. Human beings need a future in which they can take hold of their full dignity; indeed they need an absolute future, a "great hope" that exceeds every particular hope.

All of these things are already present in the heart of Christ's mission, which, as was particularly evident in his healing ministry, was always more than physical. In healing the leper, Jesus resorted him to the community, gave him a sense of belonging.

Our mission finds its inspiration in this ministry of Jesus.

Following Jesus, we feel ourselves called not only to bring direct help to people in distress, but also to restore entire human persons in their integrity, reintegrating them in community and reconciling them with God.

This frequently calls for an engagement that is long-term, be it in the education of youth, in the spiritual accompaniment of the *Exercises*, in intellectual research, or in the service of refugees. But it is here, aided by grace and drawing on whatever professional capacities we may have that we try to offer ourselves to God fully, for his service.