

Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach
“The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice
in American Jesuit Higher Education”

Santa Clara University, October 6, 2000

Introduction

This conference on the commitment to justice in American Jesuit higher education comes at an important moment in the rich history of the twenty-eight colleges and universities represented here this evening. We also join Santa Clara University in celebrating the 150th anniversary of its founding.

Just as significant as this moment in history, is our location. Santa Clara Valley, named after the mission at the heart of this campus, is known worldwide as “Silicon Valley,” the home of the

Just as the Vatican had abandoned the name "*Propaganda Fide*", GC 32 passed from propagation to service of faith. In Decree 4, the Congregation did use the expression "the proclamation of faith," which I prefer.

gospel.”⁽¹³⁾ But one can understand the Congregation’s fear that too neat or integrated an approach might weaken the prophetic appeal and water down the radical change in our mission.

In retrospect, this simple juxtaposition sometimes led to an “incomplete, slanted and unbalanced reading” of Decree 4,⁽¹⁴⁾ unilaterally emphasizing “one aspect of this mission to the detriment of the other,”⁽¹⁵⁾ treating faith and justice as alternative or even rival tracks of ministry. “Dogmatism or ideology sometimes led us to treat each other more as adversaries than as companions. The

4, we face a world that has an even greater need for the faith that does justice.

2. A “composition” of our time and place

Let us turn now to a mention of some of the changing signs of the times.

Meeting in Silicon Valley brings to mind, not only the intersection of the mission and the microchip, but also the dynamism and even dominance that are characteristics of the United States at this time. Enormous talent and unprecedented prosperity are concentrated in this country, which spawns 64 new millionaires every day. This is the headquarters of the new economy that reaches around the globe and is transforming the basic fabric of business, work, and communications. Thousands of immigrants arrive from everywhere: entrepreneurs from Europe, high-tech professionals from South Asia who staff the service industries as well as workers from Latin America and Southeast Asia who do the physical labor — thus, a remarkable ethnic, cultural and class diversity.

At the same time the United States struggles with new social divisions aggravated by “the digital

promote justice.

3. American Jesuit Higher Education for faith and justice

Within the complex time and place we are in, and in the light of the recent General Congregations, I want to spell out several ideal characteristics, as manifest in three complementary dimensions of Jesuit higher education: in who our students become, in what our faculty do, and in how our universities proceed. When I speak of ideals, some are easy to meet, others remain persistently challenging, but together they serve to orient our schools and, in the long run, to identify them. At

do but who they become and the adult Christian responsibility they will exercise in the future towards their neighbor and their world. For now, the activities they engage in, even with much good effect, are for their formation. This does not make the university a training camp for social activists.

social apostolate in order to research and teach and form. Such partnerships do not turn Jesuit universities into branch plants of social ministries or agencies of social change, as certain rhetoric of the past may have led some to fear, but are a verifiable pledge of the faculty's option and really help, as the colloquial expression goes, "to keep your feet to the fire!"

If the professors choose viewpoints incompatible with the justice of the Gospel and consider researching, teaching and learning to be separable from moral responsibility for their social

upon it and to use university influence to transform it.

7. Cf. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., "On the Social Apostolate," January 2000, n.3.
8. "Since evangelisation is proclamation of that faith which is made operative in love of others (see Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 4:15), the promotion of justice is indispensable to it," (GC32, D.4, n.28).
9. Cf. GC 34, D.26, n.5.
10. For example, GC32, D.11, n.13.
11. GC 34, D. 26, n.8.
12. GC 33, D.1, n.32.
13. 1971 Synod of Bishops, "Justice in the World."
14. Pedro Arrupe, *R* *G* *L* , 67 (AR XVIII, 500).
15. GC33, D.1, n.33.

32. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Address to the Congregation of Provincials (20/09/90), AR 20 (1990), p. 452.

33. John Paul II, *E C E* , August 1990, n. 32.

34. Galatians 5:6.

35. GC32, D.2, n.8.