

« Do you still have the Jesuit virus? »
Message of the pope to the Jesuit alumni

« Dear Brothers,

I received this letter from Father Gilberto Freire, asking me a message to this XVI Latin American congress of alumni of the Society of Jesus which takes place in Guayaquil, the beloved Guayaquil, from 11 to 13 November of this year. And they send me some questions. I thought... talking to former students of the Jesuits gives me the opportunity to say what the Pope, the Jesuits, the Church all expect, from a man or a woman who studied at a Jesuit school or at a Jesuit university.

What do they expect from them? How should their profile be? When someone presents himself or herself to me and says: "I studied with the Jesuits", I asked him or her: «Do you have the virus inside or not, or have you lost it already?» That is, what is the profile of someone who let him- or herself be educated by the Society of Jesus and what is it he or she has to give to the world today? How should one act? And giving some thought to the matter, I went to the source, the *Spiritual Exercises*, and I would like to propose as an inspiration to your mode of proceeding, the Contemplation of the Incarnation: the number 101 of the *Exercises*. Yes, some of you may be thinking: "Uh, this one comes to do us a sermon". I come to say what I think every one of you should be and I wish you to achieve it, I guess, because my intention is to accompany you in this celebration and help you.

The Jesuit and therefore anyone who has studied with the Jesuits possesses this as his heritage; he or she has to be under tension, continuously under tension. Under tension between heaven, earth and him or her. He or she cannot hide his or her head, as does the ostrich, from the reality of earth. He or she cannot fabricate him- or herself an isolated world with a "light" religiosity in front of the reality of God. And he or she cannot sell his or her conscience to worldliness. That is, they are tensions, how do I stand in front of God?, how am I to the world?, how am I against the worldly spirit that is being proposed to me all the time? So, if you respond to those three questions, you can gauge to what extent the training received from the Society of Jesus has penetrated or to what extent it is stored in a closet. You should pull it out, or it would be very sad if you do not even remember it. I think that as a priest, as a bishop, as a Jesuit, it is the best contribution that I can give you at this XVI congress of the Latin American confederation of Jesuit alumni.

San Ignacio, in the Meditation of the Incarnation, puts us under tension on three things: First, he makes us look at the sky: at the three Divine persons. On the other hand, he makes us look at the Earth: people, men, countries, situations. Finally, he makes us look at one person, in this case, Mary in her house of Nazareth, and that person is today every one of you. And he says: "Bring the thing that I have to contemplate". And what is the thing? How the three divine persons looked across the plain, the surface of the world, full of men. That is God looking at men and seeing that all descended into hell, that is, lived in a pagan way, and deciding in its eternity that his Son become man to save them. After that, he continues "... and see the place, see the vastness and the surface of the world, in which they are so many different people. Also, see what these people do too. The one and the other. In such diversity, in costumes as well in gestures, some white and others black, some in peace,

others in war, some crying, others laughing, some healthy and others sick, some being born and others dying"; that is to look at reality as it is. This is the second thing. And third, look at the house of Our Lady of Nazareth. And what does God do? What do men do?

And God decides to send his Son to save. Men receive salvation to be saved from blindness and tragedies. And the Virgin says yes. It's curious, when describing what the people say, to see how they talk to each other, how they swear, they blaspheme, how they fight, what they say ... And this is what inspires me to speak to you. The Church wants you Jesuit alumni to be under tension. Under tension between the faith you profess - God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, God who sends his Son into the world -, and that faith under tension with what is happening in the world today. This is a Latin American Congress, so, what happens in Latin America?, how many children do not go to school because they can not?, how many kids do not have enough to eat?, how many children are not in good health?

Three things: health care, food, education. Think about that. Think about the "human tragedy", I do not like to use the words "social tragedies"... but human tragedies, because every person is the temple of the Trinity. Think about the human tragedies that are happening in Latin America. In Buenos Aires, an area of the riverbank causes me affliction. There were 36 restaurants in a row. The ones who were going to dinner there they would rip them off, and make them pay a lot. These restaurants were usually full. At the end, there was a railway station and immediately after began a slum, a shack, a favela. And on this side, just about the same.

May this figure make you see the tragedy that the lack of justice, the lack of equity bring today. And among the people who were eating there, many were Christian, many believed in Jesus Christ and professed themselves as Catholic, and perhaps had studied in catholic schools. Well, that is an example. If you have within you the "Jesuit virus", you have to watch what you say to God when you see this inequality, what you say to God when you see the exploitation of children labor, the exploitation of people, what you say to God when you see that the earth is not being taken care of and that sowing and planting deforests land, and that this hurts people, what you say to God when mining companies use cyanide or arsenic to extract mineral and that this attacks the health of so many people, so many children, so many adults.

That's what St. Ignatius tells us: "Look like God looked at the face of the earth, look at all men, some being born, others dying, others crying, others laughing; look at reality... how is your relationship with reality or, put differently, how do you transcend yourself ?, are you enclosed in yourself ?, do you imagine the Virgin closing the door not to get the call of God? You cannot imagine her doing that. But if you're a Christian, do what she did. How do you look at men?, with which look? The look of your comfort, of your peace of mind, of someone who does not want problems, or the look of your wallet?, and how do you look at God?, face to face ?, person to person ?, who would you talk to? a "spray-God", fuzzy... or would you talk to the Father who is your Father, would you talk to the Son who is his son, would you talk to the Holy Spirit you received in the baptism. Okay, that is how I want you, under tension. And truth is always given under tension, truth is not still, it is not crystallized, it is stressful, it leads you to act, it leads you to change, it leads you to do, it leads you to imitate God the creator, redeemer, sanctifier. It leads you to be human.

Are you under tension? or are you quiet, comfortable ... like: "I do not want trouble." In this Congress, I wish that you ask yourself this question... how do I live as a Jesuit alumnus what St. Ignatius shows us in the mystery of the Incarnation?, how do I live?, am I under tension or do I not care for anything? Well, this is what I happen to propose, I wish you a very good Congress. Guayaquil is a beautiful city, a city that I love; may your Congress be fruitful. Fruitful, particularly for the heart of each of you, for the people whom you work with and for God with you; How you bring God into your family? I ask the Lord to bless you, the Virgin to look after you and if you see Father Paquito give him a hug from me. May God bless you. »

Transcript: Fr. Guillermo Ortiz SJ - Spanish Programs Vatican Radio

Freely translated from Spanish: «¿Todavía tienen el virus jesuítico?», Mensaje del Papa a ex alumnos de la Compañía de Jesús