



All Things Ignatian



On Fire at the Frontiers

International Conference on the Commitment to Justice in Jesuit Higher Education

Background

In 1999, all 28 Jesuit Universities in the U.S. were invited to prepare a self-study in anticipation of the 25th anniversary of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1975) and its famous Decree 4, which made justice a central dimension of all Jesuit ministries, including higher education. What had been done and what had been learned in that quarter of a century?

The first national conference was hosted by Santa Clara University, October 4-6, 2000. It was at this major event that the Father-General of the Society, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, delivered his landmark address, “The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education.” Subsequent conferences have been held at John Carroll University in 2005 and Fairfield University in 2009.

The most recent conference was hosted by Creighton, August 1-4, 2013. It was attended by 325 representatives of all members of the Association of Jesuit Colleges & Universities. Each of the schools prepared an Institutional Examen on justice. (See the poster on Creighton’s Examen elsewhere in this exhibit.)

Plenaries

The conference was keynoted by Sr. Margaret Farley, RSM, Professor Emerita of Christian Ethics at Yale University Divinity School. In “Higher Education, Justice, and the Church,” Sr. Farley spoke eloquently of the relationship between justice and forgiveness. Fr. David Hollenbach, SJ, University Chair in Human Rights and International Justice at Boston College, spoke from a global perspective in his keynote address, “Accompaniment, Service, and Advocacy.”

Two plenary panels were presented. Fr. Gerry Blaszcak, SJ, Secretary for the Promotion of Faith; Fr. Michael Garanzini, SJ, President of Loyola University Chicago and Secretary for Higher Education; and Dr. Kristin Heyer, Hanley Professor at Santa Clara University, shared their perspectives on International Issues and Connections.

An International Jesuits Panel was comprised by Fr. Peter Otieno, SJ, and Fr. Joseph Afulo, SJ, both of the East Africa Province; Fr. Paxtí Álvarez, SJ, of Loyola, Spain, Secretary for Social Justice & Ecology; and Fr. José Morales Orozco, SJ, President of Universidad Iberoamericana, the Jesuit university in Mexico City.

A final plenary session focused on the Institutional Examens prepared by all the schools. Fr. Thomas Smolich, SJ, President of the Jesuit Conference of the U.S., offered an overview and moderated a discussion. All of the plenaries were recorded and may be viewed by clicking on “Livestream” at <http://blogs.creighton.edu/justice2013/>

Breakouts

Forty-seven presentations were offered in five breakout sessions. Topics offered by Creighton faculty and staff included:

- *Teaching, Learning and Practicing the Catholic Social Tradition: A Research Initiative;
- *Toward a Sociology of Conscience: The Legacy of Gordon Zahn;
- *When the Gospel Grows Feet: The Community-Based Ministry of Rutilio Grande, SJ; and
- *Varieties of Shameful Experience: Implications for Justice Education.

For a complete list of topic, see the website above.

Evaluation

One-hundred-fifty-six (48%) conferees responded to an evaluation survey. When asked “Given [your] previous experience, how well did this

conference add to your knowledge of, or commitment to, justice in Jesuit higher education?”, 53% responded “A great deal,” 42% “Moderately,” and 6% “Little.”

Respondents are eager to apply their learning and/or their new relationships for the benefit of students. Some will improve existing courses, others create new ones. Some are looking across the curriculum, many more narrowly at their own teaching. Others are focused on non-curricular programming. Respondents also intend to bring what they learned to their own campuses to address institutional policies or culture. Many hope to generate conversations, as well as integrate what they learned into their centers.

Future Plans

Watch for announcements of opportunities to reflect with your colleagues on Creighton’s Institutional Examen on Justice.

The next AJCU Justice Conference will be hosted by Seattle University, August 10-12, 2017.

This poster was prepared by Dr. Roger Bergman, on behalf of, and with gratitude for, the Justice Committee 2013 at Creighton.

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