



7th Foundation Day Lecture
by Rev. Fr. Jeyaraj Veluswami, S.J.,

Values: The Foundation of Jesuit Higher Education

Introduction

First of all, let me wish you all, a very happy Foundation Day.

On this auspicious day, it gives me immense happiness, as the First Chancellor of SXUK, to be with you all to celebrate the 7th Foundation Day of SXUK.

Today, 8th Feb 2023, SXUK completes its 6 ‘wondrous years’ of incredible growth and commendable service in the city of Kolkata. The 6 years young SXUK tree today adds a new branch to its strength, the 7th new branch. This smooth and rapid growth has been made possible, chiefly thanks to the far-sighted, ever dynamic and ever innovative leadership given by our Hon’ble Vice- Chancellor, Rev. Fr. Dr. John Felix Raj, SJ, and thanks to the continuous, unfailing support from Jesuit Fathers, from the Registrar, from the dedicated teams of all the administrative staff, the teaching staff, the support staff, the infant alumni, as well as thanks to the serious and aspiring batches of students and scholars at SXUK.

I said ‘the six wondrous years’, because I have been a witness myself to the marvellous ways in which SXUK has emerged as one of the most sought-after campuses for students and scholars, from all over India as well as from abroad, with the SXUK campus growing day by day more and more modern and magnificent.

I must also add here that I have also been a witness to the power and mystery behind this magnificent achievement. That power and mystery is what we all see and experience in the ever-inspiring personality of Rev. Fr. Dr. John Felix Raj, SJ, our Hon’ble Vice-Chancellor. I consider myself very privileged to have been closely associated with our Dear Father Vice-Chancellor, and more specially with his deep spiritual strength, all-encompassing vision, untiring efforts and meticulous planning in bringing up SXU to what it is today: a fast emerging university in India.

So, on this happy occasion of the 7th Foundation Day, I thought it would be quite appropriate and inspiring to recollect and share with you all, some important aspects of the vision and the values that we set before us on the day SXUK began its academic journey, 6 years ago.

This could be the first part of my address today, on the topic: Values: The Foundation of Higher Education.

PART - I: Values of Higher Education at SXUK

On 7th July, 2017, First Academic Day

Let me now take you all back to the first academic day.

‘This is indeed a historic day for all of us. We have been eagerly waiting for this graced moment to arrive, when we could have all of you grace this occasion and bless the inauguration of St Xavier’s University. And more specially, bless our first batch of students and our new faculty members.

Education for us has been and is a mission; a mission to continue forming generations of Xaverians into ‘men and women for others’ and ‘men and women with others’; Jesuit universities across the world today seek the integral enrichment of students by offering them professional development, helping them to be responsible and committed citizens, and opening them to the transcendent dimensions of life. This orientation has been well expressed as the formation of persons who are conscientious, competent, compassionate, and committed.

St Xavier’s University, Kolkata (SXUK) too will keep at its heart the two dimensional vision of education: student-formation and social transformation. Thus, every Xavierian will be a well formed citizen who will consider it his or her mission to play a transformative role in society, to make our society more just, more egalitarian, more humane, more prosperous and more harmonious.

To help you achieve your dreams and aspirations, SXUK is committed to place at your service the following three essential components: first, a competent and committed faculty, secondly a Xaverian campus culture and thirdly a Xaverian student-faculty learning pedagogy.

Moreover, we are well aware that today a University education cannot be effective and productive, if it is not global in its outlook, in its values, in its curriculum, and in its teaching cum research methods. Hence, following in the footsteps of St Xavier’s College, Kolkata; SXUK too will tie up with other renowned Jesuit Universities across the world so as to prepare the next generation of Xaverians, who will be outstanding global leaders in whichever field of career or profession they would choose to contribute.

With this vision and road map before us, we embark today; and we pledge to live up to your expectation; we seek your blessings and support, your goodwill and cooperation in this mission.”

That was 6 years ago!

Now 6 years on, what do I see? I see more and more efforts, planning, and innovations are being made to take the University to the next level; that is making the SXUK a complete and perfect

campus in all aspects: namely, modern infrastructures, committed and erudite faculty, dedicated and cooperative administrative staff, generous and collaborative alumni, and scholarly and vibrant student community.

2022- 2023 SXUK Calendar: Father Vice-Chancellor lays out this roadmap before our Freshers:

‘Welcome to our Freshers.

“I christen you, Freshers, into the spirit and culture of the Xaverian family and warmly welcome you to St Xavier’s University, Kolkata.

I am sure that within the next few years you will experience the Xaverian excellence that shall be a part of you ever after. In this Jesuit university, you will not only be the recipient of a world class education that has been tried and tested for over five centuries, but you will also feel proud to be transformed into leaders of tomorrow – being men and women for others. You will learn to transcend all the debilitating barriers that may be placed in your path. The University will open up horizons for you that had hitherto remained unknown and unexplored.”

PART II: Core-Values that inspire Jesuit Universities

The Value of “the Greater Glory of God and the Greater good of Souls’ (AMDG) Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.

This Jesuit motto has two significances. First, it means that Jesuits, and all Jesuit collaborators, are to seek only God’s greater glory and honour in all that they do, their works, duties, responsibility, charities, services, etc. And that conversely they are not to seek their own glory, honour, fame and name in their ministries or apostolic activities. This is why St. Ignatius, our Founder, would warn every Jesuit to be constantly on guard against seeking one’s own glory or the vain glory, in the place of the Divine glory, which is God’s glory.

The second significance is: for St. Ignatius, ‘The Greater Glory of God inherently includes ‘the greater good of souls.’ (worship of God, Service of Humanity). In other words, we cannot seek or work for God’s Glory without seeking and working for the good of others. God’s greater glory and people’s greater good are one inseparable socio-spiritual value in the Ignatian world view and spirituality. They are two sides of the same coin. Greater Glory of God is in the greater service to people! Greater service to people is to give greater glory to God.

This, as we know, is well affirmed and articulated in every religion. Swami Vivekananda has beautifully highlighted this same value as, ‘Jibe prem kore jei jon, sei jon sebicche Ishwar’ (জীবে প্রেম করে যেই জন, সেই জন সেবিছে ঈশ্বর). The true worshiper is one who loves and serves all beings. Only through the service of Jivatma can we truly worship the Paramatma !

In Islam too we find this value powerfully expressed in Hadith 13: wherein it is said, "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself"

It is this Jesuit value of 'Magis' or always seeking God's greater glory by way of rendering greater service to fellow humans that gave birth to the Mission called 'College to Village and Village to College,' whose aim was to reach the benefit of Higher Education to more youth in rural Bengal . This noble model of education was and is the brain child of our dear Father Vice-Chancellor, Rev. Dr. John Felix Raj, SJ.

The Value of 'Faith that does Justice'

General Congregation 32 of the Jesuits took place in the Jesuit Generalate, Rome in 1975, under the charismatic leadership of late Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ, the then Superior General of the Jesuits. Guided by his wisdom, the 250 Jesuit delegates defined anew what the mission of the Society of the Jesus ought to be for our times, and what would be its implications on all the Jesuit apostolates around the world: educational, social, pastoral, youth, communication, spiritual direction, etc. Thus was born the most famous Mission Statement for our times namely:

“The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another.”

Thus “the promotion of justice” was declared a central part of the Society's mission and a concrete Jesuit response to an unjustly suffering world.

Ever since 'Faith that does Justice' has become the animating characteristic of all Jesuit works, namely Jesuit schools, colleges and universities, parishes, social Institutes, media-communication centres, retreat houses and all other Jesuit ministries around the world.

In this regard, our Xavier Law School within SXU campus gains a huge importance in the Jesuit higher educational mission in India and abroad as well. For, justice in general and social justice in particular have been core values in all Jesuit enterprises and missions from the beginning of its foundation. Therefore, the purpose of all laws is to protect as well as ensure justice among people, among communities, and among nations; In this respect, Xavier Law school aims at training and giving to society a Xaverian band of enlightened and conscientious lawyers.

The Value of 'Cura Personalis' in Jesuit Higher Education

Cura Personalis in Latin means, “care for the person” or “personal care”. In the Jesuit institutional setting, Cura Personalis is having concern and care for the personal development of the “whole person” and dedication to promoting human dignity of all stakeholders in the campus. This value of Care of Individuals includes being open to and affirming and appreciating each person's social and religious background. Even though a Catholic University, in India a minority-run university, a Jesuit university is everyone's university. It welcomes students of every faith, every region and every segment. Besides, it seeks to promote higher education more among women who have not been accessing HE in great numbers in the past. Moreover, Cura personalis particularly includes special care and attention to be given to students and staff with special needs or to all differently

abled persons in our midst. In Jesuit Institutions, the care given, and the care received, is “personal care,” not an “institutionalized care.”

Value of forming ‘Men and Women For, and With Others’

One of the finest and much appreciated values being introduced in every Jesuit Institution is the formation of its students into ‘Men and Women for others and Men and Women with others.’ This, we believe, will make every Xaverian a finest human being in society. In 1973, late Father Pedro Arrupe, SJ put it this way: “Men and women who will live not for themselves, who cannot even conceive of a love of God, which does not include a love for the least of their neighbours, and who are completely convinced that a love of God, which does not result in justice for all, is a farce.”

Late Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, also a former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, described that the chief goal of every Jesuit university is to form leaders in every profession who are “men and women of competence, conscience, compassion and commitment.” The Four Cs.

I like to conclude with this my wish for all of you, ‘May we all Xaverians on this 7th Foundation Day renew our pledge and commitment to live and serve as ‘Men and women for others and with others’ both on campus and off campus. God Bless you all, Nihil Ultra!

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