

**GC32, Decree 4: Faith and Justice**  
**42 Years Later**

1975 General Congregation 32 (December 2, 1974 - March 7, 1975)

Decree 4 *"Our Mission Today"*: ***The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement***

- Transformed the identity and ministry of the Society of Jesus.
- Both a point of arrival and a point of departure.

**Point of arrival – What led up to GC 32, d. 4?**

1. For Ignatius: the importance of serving and living with the poor. Hospice.
2. Formula of 1550: "... and indeed perform any other works of charity..." He added this because it describes what they were already doing. Casa Santa Marta
3. Peter Claver, Aloysius Gonzaga, et. al. – examples of service
4. Strong involvement of Jesuits in writing the "social" encyclicals beginning with the first *Rerum Novarum* 1890
5. 1949 letter of Fr. General Jean-Baptiste Janssens on the Social Apostolate. Asks individual Jesuit provinces to create Centers for Research and Social Action.
6. 1954 letter of Fr. General Janssens: "Social action is better because its end result is more universal."
7. *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) *The Church in the Modern World* "The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well."
8. Synod of Bishops in 1971 *Justice in the World*. Affirmed that justice is *central* to the Catholic church's mission. "Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated."  
***"Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel."***
9. Center of Concern May 4, 1971. Joint initiative of the United States Conference Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Society of Jesus. Fr. General Pedro Arrupe.
10. General Congregation 32

**Point of Departure – What shifts set in motion by GC 32, d.4?**

1. Renewed energy for the *Social Apostolate*.

But only for a time! However, the social apostolate in the Society of Jesus is disappearing. Fr. Kolvenbach, *On the Social Apostolate*, 2000: “There seem to be fewer Jesuits available and less prepared for the social apostolate... The social apostolate risks losing its vigor and momentum, its orientation and impact. Were this to happen in a given Province or Assistancy, then, for lack of a vital and well-organized social apostolate, the essential dimension would also probably fade away bit by bit. Such a process of erosion would inevitably reduce GC32 to a few obligatory but rhetorical phrases in the discourse of the Society, leaving our option for the poor and our promotion of justice hollowed out.”

2. Shift of emphasis from “direct service” as an exclusive focus to the importance of transforming structures.

3. The word “advocacy” was never mentioned in Jesuit documents until GC35! (Jan-Mar 2008)

“The complexity of the problems we face and the richness of the opportunities offered demand that we engage in *building bridges between rich and poor and establishing advocacy links* of mutual support between those who hold political power and those who find it difficult to voice their interests.” GC 35, d.3, n.28

4. Rooting social commitment within our Ignatian tradition – including the Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian spirituality. Rediscovery of the tradition.

5. Promotion of justice must be a dimension of all our Jesuit works: universities, schools, parishes, spirituality centers

6. The shift from direct service to advocacy, and even the shift to affirmation that promotion of justice as part of every Jesuit work, was not without its conflicts, e.g., between Social Apostolate and Education Apostolate.

7. Jesuit martyrs – Since 1975, 57 Jesuits around the world killed directly because of their work on behalf of justice.