

# That You act Justly

[Br Vincent Kingston](#)

Some of you may not have had the opportunity to read the inspiring address given by Brother Superior Álvaro at the conclusion of the International Assembly in Rome last November. Even if you have, it is well worth a further visit. I expect one could say that the Assembly set the scene for the present Chapter, and it is in this context that I share the following extracts with you. As you would expect, Brother Álvaro's address gets to the very heart of our Lasallian vision.

... During these days, we have also felt challenged by the magnitude of the changes in our society and the growing needs of the young in the face of old and new forms of poverty in a world more and more pluricultural and multi-religious. For this reason, my first reflection refers to the realities to which we should respond ...

Our mission is to procure the human and Christian education for the young and especially the poor. Our mission is to discover that the poor today are our teachers and it is they who will be our judges in the future. It is to allow the poor to become active agents in their own development. Our mission is to announce the Gospel and to discover in the poor the face of God. Our mission is to be attentive to all forms of exclusion. Our mission invites us to have our eyes open before the inequalities created by our society and to be creative in our response to new needs. Our mission must not be reduced to mere assistance but rather go to the roots of poverty in order to find structural solutions and educate to justice. Our mission, in the words of Father Kolvenbach, S.J., is to help all youth, whatever their economic situation, not to become men and women just for themselves and those closest to them but rather to be for others, most especially the poor and the excluded.

Yet our mission also consists in helping to keep alive the search for solutions to the existential questions of the young we seek to educate. Our mission is to help them acquire an adequate hierarchy of values that gives meaning to human existence. Our mission should promote the development of an interior life, disinterested love, and generous commitment. Our mission is to assure that youth integrate within themselves reason and emotion, sentiments and impulses, free will and fragility. I believe it is necessary that we honestly ask ourselves what is the reality of our educational institutions and our other apostolic works before this need for *something more* that today's youth make manifest ...

... As I reminded the Brother Visitors of Europe in Angers recently, a few years ago the Jesuit Provincials of Europe drafted a document in which they said that *to accept immigrants is not only to say that one must not force them to return to their home country but also to provide them lodging, social services, education and the right to be united with their families in the host country. Furthermore, immigrants should not be considered as merely economically useful but also as human beings with basic rights.*

At the same time, they highlighted the role of education: *Teachers play a key role in assuring that the next generation will develop well informed and responsible attitudes with regard to refugees and those who seek asylum. We urge the development of appropriate programs at all levels of learning.*

And they conclude by saying: *Our world today is facing a crossroads moment. We can construct barriers that exclude some people and include others. We can erect walls that will need to be continually erected higher as the clamour of those who remain outside continues to increase in volume. Or we can otherwise create a global order in which justice and equality prevail and in which our faith in a common humanity is respected and incarnated in the structures of our society. History has shown us that the first solution leads to war and violence while the second leads to peace and development.*

Immigration is a reality that today concerns all continents and affects particularly children and youth. I believe that it is for us a sign of the times and that we should ask ourselves what it is that God is telling us through this human situation and how we can respond to it. Furthermore, it seems to me, given that youth generally have fewer prejudices than adults, they could help us – with their free, tolerant and open treatment towards those who are different – to try to always keep our hearts open and to find better solutions for those who find themselves obliged to leave home, their friends, their familiar surroundings and their country, seeking to begin a new life of dignity and work ...

\* \* \*

I expect it is inevitable that much of what one writes about Justice and Peace is to do with injustice and violence, suffering and oppression. So it is all the more important to make the most of, and celebrate those positive events/developments that spell out growth, improvement and a change for the best.

One such was the recent historic agreement between the politicians of the Six Counties, that the Catholic and republican Sinn Fein party, and the Protestant and loyalist Democratic Unionist party would share power in Northern Ireland, working together on the executive and at all levels of government.

As the Tablet of the 12<sup>th</sup> May put it, "Mr McGuinness is a former IRA brigade commander, which in the eyes of Mr Paisley means a mass murderer. Mr Paisley is the former ranting Protestant bigot who once despised and jeered at the Catholic religion and all who believed in it. Truly the world blinked in disbelief at what it saw last Tuesday."

There is no doubt a long way still to go for the Catholic and Protestant communities in the Six Counties to grow in understanding and acceptance of each other. The 40 years of bitter struggle (and what went on for years before then) will not be forgotten overnight. But we praise and thank the Good Lord for this moment of hope and promise, this new beginning, this fresh start . . .