Provincial Conference of Latin America Collaboration Sector

Collaboration in the heart of mission Collaboration 'with' and 'for' ...

Santa Cruz de la Sierra, March 9, 2016

"The Son can do nothing on his own, but what he sees the Father do: what he does, the Son does likewise ". John 5, 19

Introduction

- 1. These lines offer a continuation, seeking to clarify the meaning and modes of *collaboration*, in the construction of a better world for all. They are the fruit of the shared reflection of a group of lay people and Jesuits in the Meetings of the Collaboration Sector of the Conference of Latin American Provincials CPAL¹, and they include contributions from the various Provinces as an expression of a rich and complex process that cannot be reduced to a single point of view and is still under construction.
- 2. "Collaboration is a term that is understood differently in the different contexts of the Society of Jesus: sometimes it refers to the work of companions, of apostolic subjects, of co responsible persons in mission, colleagues, collaborators or partners in a particular work. The common feature of these expressions is a sense of apostolic association 'with' others 'for' the realization of a common mission. We use the word "collaboration" according to Decree 6 of General Congregation 35.
- 3. This document has been written for people linked in varying degrees with the Society of Jesus, its communities, works and apostolic projects; it is also written for supporters of Ignatian spirituality, and for men and women of good will who, inspired by the Ignatian charism, have joined forces in projects throughout our continent.

Origin and meaning of collaboration

4. Collaboration has its origin in God, who is a Community of Love and Collaboration for us. The Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, constitutes a full unity, one that collaborates in its creative and salvific work: "My Father is at work until now, so I am at work." (John 5, 17). As Christ is inspired by what he sees his father do, so we feel invited to collaborate with the same work of God in our history, to make the abundant life possible for all (cfr. John 10, 10), in communion with God, with others, and with creation (cfr. GC 35. D. 3, 12).

¹ Quito 2008, Lima 2010, Santiago de Chile 2012, Santo Domingo 2014, Lima 2015, Santa Cruz de la Sierra 2016.

- 5. Therefore, the person inspired by the Christian faith, feels sent to love what God himself loves: the world, with all its richness and diversity, so that men and women live happily. God calls us to a lifestyle that bears witness precisely to these gifts we have received and we want to share. One of the renewed graces of the Second Vatican Council was the impulse of the Church as the People of God, subject and protagonist of Evangelization. In the Church, all the baptized are full partners, called to work together with the same, in response to God's call.
- 6. Therefore, we can say that collaboration is a form of Trinitarian experience, a way of living the faith, a dynamism of spiritual partnership, effective and affective that builds the Christian community and promotes local, national, continental and global apostolic networks that connect us all together with a great diversity of people of goodwill who share the same ideals. The ultimate sense of collaboration is the participation in the creating and saving mission of God, who has wanted to associate us with his work.

Obstacles to cooperation

- 7. As in the experience of Spiritual Exercises, we must begin by making conscious the possible obstacles of a personal or structural nature that can block the creative and salvific force of collaboration. Individualism, prominence, self-reliance, discrimination, prejudice, competition and clericalism are some of the possible impediments that limit the dynamic of collaboration between us.
- 8. The world in which we live, compels us increasingly to collaboration, when we offers more fluid channels of communication, forces that more easily connect local and global processes, the growing awareness of interdependence, the need we feel not to walk alone but to seek allies for the realization of our dreams.
- 9. But also we must recognize that it is possible that fluid communication generate distances; that globalization hides the germinating signs of the kingdom; that self sufficiency and egotistical isolation are rewarded by the system; and that alliances do not always help to realize our dreams, but become the cause of their frustration.

Common call to collaboration

10. The root of the dynamism of collaboration is baptismal. This was highlighted by the Second Vatican Council, by emphasizing the common mission of all members of the People of God. As the baptized, we are collaborators in the mission of Jesus Christ. And the Latin American and Caribbean Church has also recognized this, by insisting that every baptized person is a missionary-disciple in a Church of communion and participation. (Document of *Aparecida*, 213).

- 11. In virtue of the same baptismal force, collaboration extends to all to the visible boundaries of the Church, to other Christians, to believers of other religions and to every person of goodwill who takes seriously the construction or a more human world: "Let us believe the Gospel when it tells us that the kingdom of God is already present in this world and is growing, here and there, and in different ways: like the small seed which grows into a great tree (cf. *Mt* 13:31-32), like the measure of leaven that makes the dough rise (cf. *Mt* 13:33) and like the good seed that grows amid the weeds (cf. *Mt* 13, 24-30) and can always pleasantly surprise us." *Evangelii Gaudium*, 278). The collaboration to which God invites is a river of abundant waters and every person is called to dive into its creative and redemptive dynamism.
- 12. Within this call we feel as the baptized, the Ignatian vocation is reinforced in the experience of the Spiritual Exercises that creatively integrates us in the service of the kingdom, through three dynamics:
- a personal experience of an internal knowledge of Jesus, which leads us to love and follow Him more closely;
- Church membership and commitment from within an Ignatian community, in any of its expressions:
- the orientation of one's life through qualified service to the faith, the struggle for justice and the dialogue with cultures and religions.

Different types of collaboration

- 13. The models of the Church as the People of God and the Body of Christ open us to the discovery of the various functions of its members, based on the common vocation to holiness. Since we belong to Christian communities and are called to different ministries, all of us have a particular task in the construction of the common life.
- 14. In the apostolic Ignatian community, we are called to offer to the common mission what each of us has and can (cf. SE, 231): one's professional work, prayer, time, effort, knowledge, friendship, experience, suffering, resources, limits and weaknesses. In sum, all share what they have and possess, in discernment, to fulfill the common mission. Each one cultivates an attitude of openness and acceptance, and is willing to "love and serve" God and others in everything each one does.
- 15. Collaboration can also be understood as woven networks and multiple forms of communities and in various levels: collaboration of people in specific works and/or joint projects; collaboration between works and institutions, supporting and enriching each other, and undertaking new initiatives; collaboration between apostolic bodies at local, regional, national, international and global levels.

- 16. Collaboration includes activities without remuneration what we can call voluntary but also paid responsibilities, either permanent or temporary, with the establishment of labor contracts. The existence of paid and unpaid roles poses a challenge for clarification, so that the two logics involved here are recognized and possible confusion, conflicts, expectations, and even breaks, may be avoided. Further progress is needed in the clarification of these levels of commitment, suggesting criteria of orientation and discernment for specific situations.
- 17. Among the collaborators associated with a work, whether for pay or not, there are some who are formally participate in special institutional leadership responsibilities. Provision should be made for joint formation to perform these services, care and support of these people, and to promote their participation in communal discernment. Those who perform these functions should share the fundamental values not only of the work but of Ignatian spirituality.
- 18. It can be said that, from the point of view of Ignatian identity, what is meant by collaboration in the mission, is the promotion of the articulation and of the interchange between individuals, communities and institutions in the function of the apostolic purpose. From this perspective, in the works and institutions, one can meet people in three progressive moments and dynamics:
- people who work and help in various tasks, permanently or sporadically, employees, volunteers, consultants, etc., who meet the competencies for their mission, from the professional point of view;
- people who work and serve in various ways in the works and institutions, and sympathize with Ignatian spirituality, enriching their contribution to the shared mission;
- people who have been trained and are committed from a clear Ignatian identity, integrated into their Christian life in this particular way and common mission, as a requirement of their own identity.
- 19. The "engine" of this dynamism will be the decision itself of getting involved in this process of greater engagement, responding to the call of God and being part of "those who desire to show greater devotion and to distinguish themselves in total service to their eternal King and universal Lord "(SE 97).

Collaboration requires generosity and brings joy

- 20. We are convinced that the spirit of collaboration, which must animate our service today, is not just the result of shared mission planning, but above all a generous response to the invitation that God continues to make to all of us to join his creative and salvific project, and brings us out of our "self-love, want and interest" (SE, 189).
- 21. To fight against the forces that hold us in ourselves, and to open ourselves to the dynamic of God, always involves generosity like that of the one who has found a

treasure and is able to sell everything with joy, in order to buy that field in which he has found his treasure (cfr. Matthew 13, 44).

Conclusion

- 22. Given the importance of collaboration, the importance of the formation of all in this spiritual dynamic that we have proposed, and the dedication of human and economic resources to promote it in our provinces, is clear. We must offer joint formation programs that provide tools to develop collaborative relationships and modes of work, and that consider the establishment of appropriate conditions for this. It is important to identify and embrace the richness of the professional formation in all its forms, in order to integrate the processes of service of the common mission.
- 23. The promotion of lay community life is especially important, in all the expressions that permanently raise the Spirit, for it is an indispensable support for the animation of the sustaining the commitment to collaboration in the mission.
- 24. We recall, finally, what CG 35 says. "To respond today to the pressing needs of our complex and fragile world, many hands are surely needed. Collaboration in mission is the way we respond to this situation: it expresses our true identity as members of the Church, the complementarity of our diverse calls to holiness, our mutual responsibility for the mission of Christ, our desire to join people of good will in the service of the human family, and the coming of the Kingdom of God."(D 6, 30).