

## Summary

### "The Call to Leadership of a Jesuit University: Context, Charism, Partnership Board Chairs, Presidents, and Provincials, Chicago, April 6 2024. Arturo Sosa, S.J. Superior General of the Society of Jesus"

This article summarises the speech of Fr. General Arturo Sosa, S.J., on the role of Jesuit university leaders, delivered to presidents, Board chairs, and provincials of North American Jesuit universities at a meeting in Chicago. Sosa highlights that leadership at Jesuit universities is a vocation and a call, not just a job. He advocates for a courageous and hopeful approach to leadership grounded in the Jesuit charism and emphasises the importance of partnership, discernment, and a shared mission. Although primarily directed at North American institutions, Sosa's ideas are also relevant to Jesuit higher education in Europe and Lebanon.

#### Key Ideas:

**1. Context and Challenges -The world in which we live our mission:** Arturo Sosa, S.J. addresses leaders of North American Jesuit universities, highlighting the demanding nature of their roles. He emphasises that leadership is not just a job but a vocation requiring courage and a keen awareness of the world's complex realities, including war, climate change, and technological advancements. He critiques the collapse of dialogue in society, which hinders progress towards peace, care for the environment, and the responsible use of technology.

- **Global Issues:** Sosa outlines the problematic global context, mentioning international conflicts, climate change, technological advancements, and the collapse of dialogue and democracy.
- **Higher Education Challenges:** He discusses demographic changes, financial viability, and cultural shifts affecting the value perception of Jesuit education in North America.

**2. Jesuit Charism:** Sosa reflects on the Jesuit charism, rooted in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. He outlines the historical and spiritual foundations of the Society of Jesus, emphasising its commitment to reconciliation, justice, and education. Jesuit universities are called to integrate humanities with sciences, promote active and engaged learning, and witness the Good News of Jesus Christ. Sosa states, "Our universities must not set aside the humanities but instead integrate them with the natural and social sciences in an orderly fashion, helping students to discover an overarching framework within which their choices have meaning. Our style of learning is Ignatian, active, engaged, rooted in experience" (Sosa,

p. 3). The Jesuit educational approach aims to form individuals who can think critically, act justly, and live faithfully.

Sosa argues that the perspectives Pope Francis provided to the Society of Jesus through the four **Universal Apostolic Preferences** should be deeply integrated into Jesuit universities:

- Sharing the pathway to God
- Walking with the excluded
- Accompanying young people in constructing a hope-filled future
- Collaborating in care for our common home

Sosa states, "These preferences are the main criteria for decision-making, guiding research, teaching, service, and collaboration. All our universities participate in this one mission, a universal mission. Institutions have a legitimate autonomy, and market pressures push each one to compete with the others. However, we will be much stronger if we understand ourselves as part of a network, if we contribute to the network, and if we leverage the strength of the network for greater service. If each university goes its way, the future is very uncertain. If we understand ourselves, each of the universities, as complementary parts of one body, then we can face the future with hope." (Sosa, p.4).

**3. Partnership in Mission:** Sosa stresses the importance of collaboration between Jesuit universities and their broader communities. Effective governance, rooted in strong relationships with provincial superiors and ongoing discernment through the Mission Priorities Examen (MPE), is crucial. He highlights the success of the MPE process in fostering meaningful conversations about identity and mission while also acknowledging challenges, such as the need for a more profound commitment to Jesuit values and financial sustainability.

- **Vocation and Identity:** Sosa stresses the importance of choosing and reaffirming Jesuit identity through formation, discernment, and examination of mission priorities.
- **Collaboration:** He advocates for strong relationships between universities and Jesuit provincials, fostering a network rather than isolated institutions, and emphasises the need for continuous formation in the Jesuit mission for all community members.
- **Mission Priorities Examen (MPE):** The MPE is an initiative of AJCU whose process involves broad participation and aims to discern the next steps for strengthening Jesuit identity and mission, not just meeting accreditation criteria.

- **Network Strength:** Sosa highlights the importance of viewing Jesuit universities as parts of a network, leveraging collective strength for greater service.

**4. Hope and Resilience:** Despite numerous challenges, Sosa expresses hope in the resilience and mission of Jesuit universities. He calls for leveraging the international network of Jesuit institutions to strengthen North American universities and encourages a collaborative approach to leadership that continuously chooses and reaffirms their Jesuit identity.

**Conclusion:**

In summary, Sosa's address underscores the critical role of Jesuit university leaders in navigating contemporary challenges through a profoundly ingrained spiritual and educational mission, fostering a hopeful and engaged academic community.

By: Susana Di Trolio, Spain, 2024.