

# **REDISCOVERING THE INSPIRATIONAL SOURCES**

**Seminar on  
Ignatius, Francis and Peter  
For Today's Creative Leadership**

**ARRUPE DAY**

**5 February, 2006**

**Pedro Arrupe Institute  
Raia, Goa**

## Arrupe Day, 5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2006

### General Introduction

Dear friends, welcome to this seminar on the three Jubilee Fathers, Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier and Peter Faber who can be seen models of creative leadership for us. As we know, 2006 is the 450<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of Ignatius and the 500<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Xavier and Faber.

A few weeks ago, I was in Bombay for my month long Ignatian experiment. Outside many of the parishes there were banners proclaiming the "Parish Vision Statement". Today every successful institution is known to have a clear "Vision Statement" outlining what it stands for. It has a "Mission statement" stating its general principles and a concrete "Implementation Strategy" to achieve its goals.

Each age in history has its defining moments and its defining characters, people who transform a situation by their presence. One such moment in the history of the Church and the world was the origin of the Society of Jesus. The three persons who initiated this moment were the three Jubilee fathers, Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier and Peter Faber.

In our seminar today we will be focussing on the three characteristics of Vision, Mission and Accompaniment. We look at Ignatius, the man who brought about a new vision of religious life. In a Church that had become preoccupied with individual sanctification, he brought a new and dynamic vision of "helping souls." We rediscover Xavier, the man who defined mission as a great outward movement of the Church and we focus on the lesser-known Peter Faber, who nurtured and fulfilled his mission through the "apostolate of accompaniment" Our reflections emerge primarily from the letters of these friends in the Lord.

But before we look at our three Jubilee Fathers, it would be somewhat amiss if we failed to acknowledge Pedro Arrupe, the patron of our house.

Creative Leadership spontaneously evokes the memory of Fr. Pedro Arrupe, 28<sup>th</sup> General of the Society of Jesus. Arrupe exhibits the qualities of Vision, Mission and Accompaniment to an extraordinary degree. Certainly he stands out for us as a model of creative leadership.

We think of the "Arrupe moment" which defined our Society in Post Vatican II times. Arrupe responded whole-heartedly to the call of Vatican II to renew and adapt religious life to the contemporary world. General Congregation 32, acclaimed by many as the most important General Congregation in the history of the Society, is known quite simply as "Arrupe's Congregation".

Elected while Vatican II was in its final sessions, Pedro Arrupe was entrusted by Pope Paul VI with the task of fighting atheism. At his first press conference, on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1965, Arrupe was asked by reporters, "How will you fight atheism?" Arrupe responded with a smile, "We won't be fighting anything or anyone! Our tactic is not fighting, but dialogue, mutual respect, learning to listen, trying to understand the obstacles that keep people from a knowledge of God. We must treat those who disagree with us with the same gentleness that the Japanese treat the cherry flower."

Arrupe brought the deep insight that it is misery and injustice that is at the root of atheism. Later on this insight led to the famous decree IV, "Our Mission Today- The

Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice” of GC 32, which has guided our way of proceeding ever since.

Arrupe was also a person long on action. When he was welcomed in Brazil as the black pope, he replied, “My clothes are black. I am and will remain a missionary, not a pope.” He was quick to respond to where the Spirit was calling him, as the following anecdote will suggest:

One evening in the Jesuit Curia in Rome, Fr. Arrupe was informally chatting with some of his assistants when one of them came in, saying that he had heard on the radio, yet another agonizing story of the boat people in the sea near Indonesia. The story was handed back and forth about two minutes. Then Fr. Arrupe, visibly moved, exclaimed, “And what are we to do for these people?” A few more minutes of talk and then Fr. Arrupe ended it by asking the Secretary of the Society to send a telegram immediately, asking each of the Provincials in Asia, Europe and the United States and some in Latin America: “What can we do, what ought we do, so that these people can find safe asylum in western countries?” In those few minutes in the Curia, the Jesuit Refugee Service was born.

Arrupe also had the difficult task of shepherding the Society of Jesus in difficult post Vatican-II times, which saw an identity crisis in religious life. Thousands left the Society. Numbers plummeted from a high of 36,000 in 1965 to 27,000 in 1975. In the face of this confusion Arrupe continued to radiate hope as he shepherded the Society during this time of transition. He opened up the Society of Jesus to the Contemporary world, offering the services of Jesuits to U Thant, the then Secretary General of the United Nations. Travelling widely and meeting Jesuits across the world, he left communities invigorated by his presence. At one time relations between the Spanish Jesuits and Rome were not good. On 18<sup>th</sup>, March, 1970, seven provincials of Spain offered their resignations to Arrupe. Arrupe rejected their resignations, as this would cause a split in the Society, urging them to work instead for unity. His handling of the situation, with his smiling tranquillity, soon eased the situation, and the Spanish explosion that had threatened to divide the Society of Jesus, just did not take place.

We see Pedro Arrupe, in our own times, as a remarkable man of Vision, Mission and Accompaniment. As we proceed with our seminar, focussing on Ignatius, Xavier and Faber, may we discover our own defining moment, one that calls us to creative leadership as men of vision, mission and accompaniment.

***Dinesh Braganza SJ***