



## Un Carisma vivo, un Camino compartido 150 años de las Hijas de Jesús

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Availability

### Ready to go...

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#### 1. Availability in the FI documents

In preparing this topic, my attention was called by the word “availability” which, as it is, appears only twice in the Constitutions (no. 89 and the title of Chapter 5º of the Part VI) and eight times in the Complementary Norms and Directives (nos. 23,53, 78, 91, 93, 126 and 137). It is not explained in the “Vocabulary of the CFI”, but appears on various occasions with reference to other vocabulary terms (Abnegation, Devotion, Spirit, World, Oblation and Belonging). It appears more frequently in the General Plan of Formation (14 times) of 1998. In that document, it speaks of availability from the start (where the charismatic traits are presented) and is present in all the stages of formation from the Postulancy up to Permanent Formation.

If the word “availability” appears less in the fundamental documents of the Institute, these are put across by the words “to dispose (oneself)” and “disposition”; to be ready. It deals with an action and an attitude. It is related to attitudes, aptitudes, or the frame of mind of persons. It makes reference to the act of preparing oneself as well as to orders, norms or rules marked by an authority.

The CFI speak of “to dispose (oneself), place oneself at the disposition of, to have the disposition”. They speak of the disposition of persons as well as aptitudes such as frame of mind and the preparation that the person must seek in order to love and serve more. It is necessary to dispose oneself to the action of Grace, to resemble the Lord and be disposed to perfect oneself in the service of the mission. The Sisters should be disposed to obey and disposed to go. The CFI invite the Sisters to place themselves at the disposition of the Superiors. It is to offer themselves to them [*the Superiors*] so as to make them be disposed; that is to say, invite the Sister to let herself not to decide for herself, and to let Providence and the Superiors be the ones to decide on her. That is why availability has much to see with abnegation, devotion, oblation and mission. This meaning of “availability” has a strong “Ignatian memory”.

#### 2. Availability in Ignatian language

Already from number 1 of the book of the SpEx the word “to dispose oneself” appears. St. Ignatius defines the SpEx as “*every way of preparing and **disposing** the spirit in order to remove from oneself all inordinate affections and, after removing them, to seek and find the divine will in the **disposition** of his/her life for the health of the spirit.*” The SpEx is a pedagogy to be entirely disposed to the action of the Spirit that transforms and helps us, to free the heart from all inordinate desires and to seek and accomplish the will of God over one’s life. For this, the point of departure is the Principle and Foundation which from the beginning, situates the disposition,



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the order of things according to the Divine project, and the necessary, well-ordered disposition of the person: the necessary “indifference”.

The availability is a logical consequence of the Ignatian indifference. Indifference here is understood as freedom in the face of all and to all, especially in front of the great shadows of life: death, sickness, riches, power; it is to be internally free to choose the “magis”; that which can lead more to the Principle and Foundation; to identify oneself with Christ. This freedom will be converted into a foundational experience and generator of a series of attitudes. The first is to be ready to seek and find the will of God over one’s own life in every stage of life. This demands an attitude of stripping oneself of securities and certainties. The will grows to be ready to open new paths, to serve in new tasks. The spirit grows to live “without settling down”, searching, like pilgrims, the God who is always Greater who calls us from unsuspecting ways. The magis brings a total availability to sacrifice all that maybe necessary, as in the example of Abraham, in order to arrive at the goal which God asks us, each one according to the mission that He gives us.<sup>1</sup> Dayse Agretti says in her article, “The obedience of the Son”, “*that which builds the human being is not freedom but the availability to put his strengths and his freedom at the service of something or Someone*”<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. The 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the Jesuits

We know that Mother Cándida was inspired by the Constitutions of the Society in order to edit ours, selecting those with which she felt identified and leaving the rest of the Ignatian text. She could have passed over the 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the Jesuits, but did not want to do it. She decided that it was also important for us and adapted it to our reality. Thus, in order to understand the reach of our 4<sup>th</sup> vow, it will help us to understand the 4<sup>th</sup> vow of the Society.

Ignatius defined the fourth vow as the start and principal foundation of the Society. The foundation of the Society of Jesus in 1539-1540 was the result of the vow at Montmartre in 1534, in which the first companions decided to present themselves to the Pope if the trip to the Holy Land were not possible. And so it happened. They wanted to be sent by the Pope where the needs of the Church were greater. And when the Pope wanted to send them to different places, they began their deliberations in 1539. The fourth vow expresses what is specific of the Society: total availability to serve the Church wherever the Pope would send them. The fourth vow provided the Society its structural insertion in the life of the Church in connecting its charism as a religious apostolic order within the hierarchical structure of the Church in the person of the Pope. By means of this vow, the Society participates in the universal mission of the Church at the time that the universality of its mission remains guaranteed; mission that takes place at the service of the local Churches in a varied range of ministries<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Rahner, K. *En el corazón de la espiritualidad ignaciana*. Cristianisme I Justícia. Barcelona. Noviembre 2009; Caravias, JL (2009). “Espiritualidad laical ignaciana hoy”. *Curso Magis-CVX*, III,3. Buenos Aires

<sup>2</sup> Agretti, D (2015). *La obediencia del Hijo. Itinerario de un aprendizaje en Heb 5, 7-10*

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Rotsaert, M. (2009). “Obediencia en la vida de la Compañía de Jesús. CG 35 decreto 4. Número 120”. *Revista de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*. XL, 1/2009. PP. 29-40



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Our 4<sup>th</sup> vow is for us also the vow of availability that defines our being apostolic (the mission is the nuclear axis of our being) and our place in the Church (the greater needs of Christian education).

#### 4. The 4<sup>th</sup> vow in the Hijas de Jesús

How did Mother Cándida and the first Sisters live availability? For this point, I am going to base on some of the letters of Mother Cándida; in a particular manner, on the letters surrounding the foundation of Brazil since they are the ones that are in my hands at these moments, and because they seem to me the most significant in talking about this “to be ready to go.”

Mother Cándida and the first Sisters lived “to their last breath” this availability for the mission, fruit of Ignatian indifference which impelled them to seek the greater good with great devotion, abnegation and as an oblation of themselves to the Father.

The foundation of Brazil, as with any other, is not an individual matter of Government, but that Mother saw to it that all the Sisters could accompany, be joyful and participate in the new foundation one way or the other. In fact, the whole Congregation was enthusiastic with the new foundation as manifested in their letters to Mother Cándida (letter no. 413). She herself was to embark for Brazil, but she knew that at that time it did not correspond to her (letter no. 411)<sup>4</sup>. Only six Sisters left, well selected according to the profile that the entrusted task recommended (idem), but the foundation is by all, in which all participate in whatever manner and this produced a great Congregational consolation. I transcribe here some paragraphs of the introduction to letter no. 426 which the book of the Collection [Colectánea] of letters puts, which I think summarizes the feeling of the Congregation:

*“from December 1910 Mother Cándida had her life polarized in the concretization of the project of missionary expansion of the Congregation. She was making the necessary steps to materialize the project. Her actions showed the valor of those who are not afraid of anything, of those who are disposed to take risks and confront the adventure of what is unknown. However, in her action, prudence stands out without doubt, illumined and strengthened by the gift of counsel. On April 28, 1911, she wrote a circular letter to all the communities, sharing with them the joy of this historical moment lived by the Congregation. On May 11 she addressed each of the local superiors and their respective Councils to study the possibility of lending the new foundation an amount she indicated, taking into account the economic situation of the house. Congratulations kept arriving at such a significant moment in the life of the Congregation besides the adhesion to the missionary project confirmed by the offering of the few existing resources in the communities and for the manifestation of total availability for the sending to those distant lands of America.”<sup>5</sup>.*

This availability to go is personal, but above all, corporate. As said in the CFI, it is the whole Congregation that must be ready to go (CFI 197), thus it asks every sister to make the vow of total availability to go to any part of the world where our presence and action may be a response to the need for Christian education of our brothers/sisters (CFI 167; CND 193). They are concrete

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<sup>4</sup> Cuando la Madre Cándida escribe esta carta, tenía 66 años...

<sup>5</sup> Filhas de Jesus (2010). *Madre Cândida Maria de Jesus. Coletânea de cartas*. Pág. 12. La traducción es mía. Es bueno recordar que, en esos tiempos, la salida era para toda la vida...



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Sisters who are sent to go, but these Sisters go by virtue of the sending of the Congregation and make present the Congregation. In them and with them is the Congregation that goes. That is why, not being part of the chosen group does not mean that the project is not valid or not proper. It is the whole Congregation that goes in these 2 or 3 or 4 or 6 Sisters who go. And the rest collaborate, making possible this “leaving”, each one offering what she can. It is for this that “*Belonging, whole body and availability are concepts intimately related among themselves, with a connection that is already spelled out in the text of the Formula (Cf. CFI 2)*”<sup>6</sup>.

Availability, the attitude asked so as to begin the SpEx (indifference) is turned into a free and loving offering to the Lord at the end, fruit of a process of purification, liberation, contemplation and search for the will of the Lord, confirmed in the contemplation of the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Let us pray with reverence and devotion the prayer which we repeat so many times:

*“Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my entire will; all I have and possess. You have given it to me, I return it. Everything is yours. You have given it to me, Lord, I return it. All is yours, **dispose of it according to your will.** Give me your love and grace, for this is enough for me.”*

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<sup>6</sup> Amorós, C. Linde MP (1989). *Vocabulario de las Constituciones.* Pertenecer. Pág 58-60